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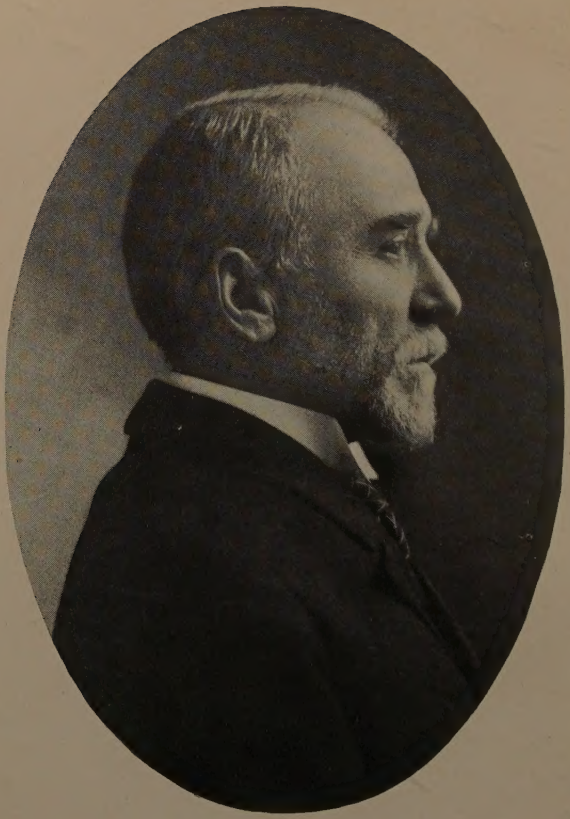
The Hungry Christ



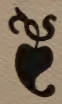
Jesse Bowman Young

The Hungry Christ

And Other Sermons Preached in Walnut Hills
Methodist Episcopal Church, Cincinnati

By

JESSE BOWMAN YOUNG, D. D.



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I.

THE HUNGRY CHRIST TEMPTED.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He afterward hungered. And the tempter came."—Matt. iv, 1, 2. (Revised Version.)

In the foreground of the Gospel history, at the beginning of the account of that ministry of grace by whose teaching and example the world has been morally rejuvenated, we are confronted with a spectacle which is fraught with instruction and comfort for all the generations of time—the Hungry Christ Tempted! How much it means to us, and to all men, that He felt the pangs of famishment, that He was tortured by hunger, and that, alone and burdened and exhausted, He was assailed in the wilderness with temptation! Let us study some of the most obvious phases of this most significant incident.

There is matter in this incident for a volume,

rather than for a single sermon. Let us group about the figure of the Hungry Christ, tempted by the Adversary of souls, a few of the lessons which lie on the very surface of the narrative.

1. And, first, let us look at a preliminary feature of the story—*the timeliness of the assailment;* for that is what made it of tremendous force. Occurring at the outset of the Master's career, it marked the opening of His public life, and came at the time when His policy had to be determined upon, His principles had to be indicated, His plans had to be shaped. His public life was to be accompanied throughout by assailment, allurements, enticements such as are thrown in the way of every worker; but now at the very inception of His enterprise there was thrust upon Him a series of typical temptations which had a direct bearing upon the work to be undertaken.

This phase of the case may be paralleled by similar allurements which every earnest soul must face in making plans for a vocation, or in passing the critical stages and turning points which come early in every strenuous human career. The young college student must at the beginning of his work decide what sort of a life he is going to lead,—whether he will be really a student, a toiler, an aspirant after

knowledge; whether he will strive for discipline, culture, wisdom; or whether he will simply drift through the four years and come out at the end with barely enough credits in his favor to afford him a diploma. The young business man must at the outset determine whether his policy shall be one of industry, integrity, enterprise, frugality, fidelity to noble principles, or whether, on the other hand, he will follow a multitude to do evil, imitate the tricks of trade followed by his competitors, and be simply the sport of circumstances, floating upon the currents of commerce. The man who starts out in a profession in like manner has to face similar questions. Will he cultivate a high professional ideal, care more for his personal honor than for money, cherish a scrupulous regard for faithful and honest service, strive first and foremost for efficiency, for character, for knowledge of the truth; or will he allow himself to become a quack, a shyster, a trickster, aiming simply at getting money, or struggling primarily for personal notoriety or so-called popularity?

Need I say that the principles adopted at the outset, the aims and ideals which are cherished at the start, have a shaping force, a molding influence upon all the after life? Temptations therefore which occur at the outset of one's life take hold upon the

very roots of character, upon the foundations of the moral and intellectual life, upon the fundamental factors which determine success or failure. This principle makes a study of the temptation of our Lord at the opening of His ministry one of far reaching import and value to us. This incident in His ministry was not merely incidental, but essential, fundamental, and formative in its issues and influence. It was like the trial voyage of a battleship, in which every wheel, valve, gauge, piston, cylinder, boiler, crank, pinion, and pulley in the complicated machinery is watched, tested, and judged by experts in order to determine whether the vessel is likely to stand the storms and commotions and perils of tempest and voyage and darkness and battle in its adventurous career, now possibly begun. A test at the outset, a searching trial at the beginning, a series of typical temptations at the opening of His career, having a direct and evident relation to His whole career,—this is the picture set now before us.

2. *Further note that the temptation came immediately after a wonderful and uplifting spiritual experience.* The Master had emerged from His home in Nazareth, and had come to the Jordan, and had there been baptized by John. This public consecration of Himself to His work, this ordination service

at the hands of the Forerunner, was accompanied by inward and outward tokens of blessing. John recognized that He was the Messiah; there came upon the Master a visible descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove; and a voice came out of heaven, reaching possibly other ears besides that of the Lord Himself, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." A new enduement of Divine power came upon Him, giving Him an uplift, a scope of vision, a sense of power, an experience of ennoblement, a consciousness of authority and spiritual elevation, unknown before. We gather this from the words of the evangelist, St. Luke, who tells us that when Jesus returned from the Jordan after the baptism He was "full of the Holy Spirit." This had not been said of His experience before. In view of the work before Him, the pressure to be put upon Him, the duties of His new office, the trials He was to bear, the comfort He was to administer, the blessings He was to dispense, He was on this occasion, as He had never been before, "filled" with the Spirit's influence, purity, and power. Possibly the supernatural equipment which He needed in order to heal the sick, and quiet the storm and cleanse the leper and cast out demons, or perhaps the full consciousness of that high endowment, came upon Him at the

baptism. He realized now in the fullest measure His great mission, His Messianic functions and responsibilities, the vastness and the difficulties of His task, and the mighty and blessed equipment which was provided for Him in view of all the needs of the future. To His human nature there came a new revelation of Divine girding and strength, a new assurance of heavenly co-operation, a new life from above, as the way was now opened for Him to commence the task of which He had been dreaming, over which He had been praying, for which He had been preparing ever since earliest childhood.

We may not enter into the secrets of the new experiences which gladdened and uplifted His soul, the new joy which lighted His path and illumined His vision, the new quickening which came to heart and brain. But of the fact that this was an occasion of precious, exalted, profound, and far-reaching spiritual experiences and revelations, no one who reads the New Testament can doubt. Just as the disciples themselves were qualified for their larger activities by the special descent of the Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost, just so it occurred that the Master was fitted out and furnished forth for His ministry in an especial manner by the descent of the Spirit upon Him at His baptism.

It was in this exalted mood, this rapturous time of communion with His Father, this season when His heart was filled with visions of victory, plans of helping and rescuing men, thoughts of peace and hope and blessing for the world,—it was in the midst of such an experience that the temptation in the wilderness came to Him. The contrast made the assailments all the more terrible and trying. As Fairbairn says, it is significant that this part of our Savior's career came "just after the baptism and just before the public ministry; just after the long silence and just before the brief yet eternal speech; just after the years of privacy and just before the few but glorious months of publicity." This season of gladness and of spiritual elevation was immediately followed by a time of subtle assailment, of Satanic enticement, of attack and allurement marked by all the craft, ingenuity, and tremendous might which are characteristic of the Adversary of souls.

Satan has not ceased to practice this policy in the world. He takes advantage to-day, as he did in the olden time, of the special times and seasons of human experience in order to take human souls at a disadvantage. After a time of light and joy and peace, he sometimes brings dismal fears, forebodings, and depressions. Once in a while experiences of turbu-

lence and horror come to the convert soon after conversion. Even John Wesley testifies to this fact in his *Journals*. He tells the world that on a certain date he felt his heart strangely warmed, and knew that he had been forgiven, that Christ had died even for him, and that he had passed from death unto life. This was a blessed escape and relief for him after long years of penance, of praying, and of toil. That was on May 24, 1738, about nine o'clock in the evening. He testified then and there concerning the new experience which had come to him, and an hour later friends went with him to his brother Charles, who had found peace some time before, and they prayed and sang and rejoiced together. But before the night was over he was "much buffeted with temptations, which returned again and again." The next day the enemy injected a fear that "the change was not great enough, and that therefore his faith was not real." Two days later he was "in heaviness through manifold temptations." After a week he records the fact that he had "grieved the Spirit of God, that God had hidden His face, and he was in trouble and heaviness" till the next morning. And five months later we find him writing bitter things against himself, lamenting that he had not received the witness of the Spirit, accusing himself of

not being a Christian, and fancying that the love of God had departed from him! He declares that he had no joy, nor peace, nor love; that, although he had used all the means of grace for twenty years and had months before this received the joyful assurance of pardon, yet he was not a Christian! Knowing his life as we now do, we can easily see that this was simply a temptation, but that it was well-timed; it was hurled against the evangelist just when his heart was filled with new-found ardor and joy, when he was planning great victories for the Master, and when defeat would mean much for the cause of Satan in the world. Let no man or woman, therefore, be unduly alarmed if temptations come immediately after great spiritual victories, if depression closely follows elation, if tears come after joy, if fears and a horror of great darkness and a fierce fight of afflictions shall immediately follow upon the heels of a notable victory. Laughter and tears lie side by side in the human heart; and Satan knows well how to time his assaults so as to make the contrast between light and darkness all the more terrible.

It was only a few days after Paul's wonderful vision at the gates of Damascus, after the scales had fallen from his eyes and he had been made to rejoice as a brother beloved in the communion of saints,—

when the mob pursued him, when plots to kill him were made, and when he had to flee by night out of the city and escape into Arabia in order to elude the plot of those who would slay him. Bunyan in his "Pilgrim's Progress" tells us on one page of his work about Christian and Hopeful as they found on their way a pleasant river—the river of the water of life. On its banks they walked with delight, they drank of its life-giving streams "pleasant and enlivening to their weary spirits." They ate of the luscious fruits which grew by the river, and slept in the meadows among the lilies, and were refreshed. Life seemed to them just then a season of unbroken joy and peace. But almost on the next page we are told of By-path Meadow, and of deep pits in which the pilgrims floundered, and of capture by Giant Despair, and of imprisonment in the dungeons of Doubting Castle. Earlier in the pilgrimage a similar contrast occurs when we find the two wayfarers lodged on their journey in the House called Beautiful, and sleeping in the large upper chamber whose window opened toward the sun-rising, and "whose name was Peace," so that when they woke refreshed and rejoicing they sang their song of hope and gladness that they had "already dwelt next door to heaven." But on the very day they started out afresh

on their pilgrimage, before the evening came, they entered the Valley of Humiliation, where Christian was engaged in mortal combat with the foul fiend Apollyon. After fighting with him and overcoming, there was but a short interval of rest before they entered into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Thus side by side the great Allegorist paints the shifting scenes of the Christian life, his wisdom and insight being revealed in the fact that he shows struggle and joy and victory closely allied with tears and grief and humiliation and pain.

These manifold instances may serve to suggest to us the lesson involved in the timeliness of our Lord's temptation. We may expect a reaction after great elevation of soul, and we should be on our guard against the assailments which are likely to come upon us in connection with such seasons of rejoicing and elation.

3. Further, how significant and suggestive is the truth that *our Lord was tempted when hungry; that it was the hungry Christ who was assailed!* Here is a fact which brings the Master into singularly close and intimate touch with the great mass of struggling humanity who toil in daily agony for bread. When we reflect on the amount of wealth that there is in the world, and on the vast sums that

are worse than wasted in sensuality, in dissolute living, in gaudy and gorgeous displays, the heart sinks within us at the thought of the scores of millions of people on the globe who have never known what it is to have enough food to satisfy hunger for one day. They go to sleep with an empty stomach gnawing at their vitals; they wake emaciated and weak from lack of nourishment; their one long, unbroken cry, from birth till death, is Food, Food, Food! Think of the millions who have died of famine in India; consider the struggle for bread which goes on among the hunger-pinched millions of China; recall for a moment the degradation and misery of the squalid tribes of Africa where vast multitudes eke out the lowest sort of an animal existence by living on roots, reptiles, and offal; picture to yourselves the condition and environment of great masses of laboring people in this and other lands, where the wage-earning head of the family has to provide rent, food, clothing, medicine, and all other expenses of the household on an income of a dollar or two a day, at which rate life is simply one prolonged face-to-face struggle with starvation; think of the food riots which now and then have taken place, even in our own day, in large cities, when savage and half-starved mobs of famishing men and women have paraded the streets

with their banners, clamoring for "Bread or Blood," —it is only when you recall these things and allow them to have their weight with your judgment that you can appreciate the significance of the great truth that "the anguish of hungry men" was felt by the Son of God, that a fierce attack was made upon Him when He was famishing, and that He thereby came into fellowship with the needy and the starving and the famine-stricken, with multitudes who, dying by inches, feel for the time as if bread were the chief thing in the world.

But this phase of the temptation has a larger scope, for hunger is but one of the appetites, clamorous, rapacious, insatiable, with which we are equipped. And the appeal made by temptation to the Hungry Christ was really typical of the wider and more general appeal to appetite which Satan makes continually in dealing with men. Looking at the scene from this view-point we may apprehend how the Master was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin. And since this assailment may be taken to include all the enticements which are based on bodily needs and fleshly appetites, we may rejoice in the vision which it affords of the Master victorious over such attacks, and furnished by His experience of temptation with a tender and

all-embracing sympathy for all who are similarly assailed. Wherefore He is able to succor them that are tempted!

4. *Another phase of this incident needs to be emphasized: it came in a period of physical exhaustion, when the life forces were at a low ebb, when bodily strength had well-nigh collapsed,* and when the manhood had been weakened to the point of famishment by fasting, prayer, nightly vigils, and a sojourn in the wilderness for forty days. Doubtless these had been also days of temptation, but the character of the assailments to which He was subjected during that period is not hinted at. The full force of the temptation, the three typical assailments, came when the forty days of fasting were at an end, when He was weakened to the point of exhaustion by hunger and spiritual struggles and the natural reaction from profound inner experiences. Nervous force, brain power, bodily strength, physical fortitude,—these were all under a tremendous pressure when the Evil One came upon Him in full power. In this sense also the temptation was well-timed. The attack was skillfully contrived so as to be operative just at the time when the human nature of the tempted One was depleted to the point of utter weakness.

Satan pursues the same policy to-day. He fol-

lows up men patiently, waits till his victims are breathless, faint, exhausted, and then crowds upon them with all his fiery agencies of pain and allurement. Those who long to win great victories in the spiritual life need to consider carefully their hours of weakness and exhaustion, for these are always hours of risk and exposure. The lawyer who has used up his energies in a taxing trial of wit and knowledge and skill in the court, and comes out with his strength used up and his life forces depleted; the physician who, at the end of a long day of labor, in which sympathy, wisdom, strength, help, and life have been poured forth by him without stint, finds himself in the evening almost helpless in his weakness; the woman in the home who, driven with her exacting duties, irritated by manifold exasperations and weighted down with the heavy burdens which ofttimes come to her, finding more than two hands can do in the work of the day, comes to the evening hour tired, heartsick, faint, and on the verge of a nervous collapse; the working man toiling to the utmost limit of his bodily powers from morning till night; the financier, anxious on account of his investments, his credit at stake, his estate tottering in the balance, his earthly interests involved in the turn of the market, and his brain distracted when the week's end is reached as he turns from his office to

his home, not knowing what the next week may bring forth,—all these are instances of men and women who are on the edge of peril. For such an exigent period in human experience is always a time of danger. Temptation then comes with unwonted advantage, with tenfold force, with sweeping power.

Let every man and woman take warning, then, that the time of physical exhaustion is a time of peculiar hazard. Temptation launches its assailments at the soul when it is unstrung, ungirded; when its energies are relaxed and unhinged; when its faculties, having been on a strain for days or weeks, are off guard. Under such circumstances the soul is in imminent danger.

Browning's insistent message to the world was that the "ungirt loin and the unlit lamp" were the great cause of human failure, the great occasion of condemnation. One of his most characteristic utterances for all time and for all men is that which is found in his very latest lines written just before his death, in which he described himself as

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,—
Never doubted clouds would break;
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph;
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake!"

The lines remind us of the vivid phrase used by the unknown author of the Book of Judges in describing the unrelenting fortitude of Gideon and his men, after they had driven the Midianites across the plains and down into the Jordan Valley and across that turbid stream: "Faint, yet pursuing." That word contains the secret of many a victory. But to relax purpose, and to allow the soul to be ungirt in the hour of faintness, is to incur peril of the most threatening sort.

The man who is strong in his hours of weakness; who holds his tongue in restraint when his nerves are rasped and his soul inwardly upheaves; who maintains his equipoise when crushed and burdened, and writhing in pain and uncertainty,—that man is the true hero. Be on your guard, then, in times of bodily collapse and of physical weakness. Those are times of peril and of dread.

I have but glanced at some of the circumstances which environ the Temptation, and my time is exhausted. Jesus was tempted to doubt the Heavenly Father's care; tempted to use in His own behalf the miraculous powers which had been given to Him in trust for the needs and sorrows and advantage of men; tempted to doubt even His own Divine Sonship; tempted to presume and be rash and overven-

turesome, to expose Himself to perils to which duty and faith did not urge Him; tempted to take a short and easy path to the throne by compromising with Satan, by using a policy of display and dazzling the wonder-loving mob by an exhibition of spectacularism; tempted to buy from Satan the kingdom for which He had at last to give His life,—these, in brief, were the chief elements in the temptations which inaugurated our Lord's ministry. It was no mock show contest, but a battle royal which occurred in the wilderness. Edward Irving once said: "When I remember all the circumstances of this trial, this conflict between Satan and Christ, it stands before my imagination as the most terrible thing to which the earth or the heavens above have ever been witness." It was, we may believe, a struggle in which we were vitally interested, a conflict which took place in our behalf; for it was not as a man simply that Christ resisted, but as the Messiah, the anointed Christ, who was about to enter upon His public ministry, and who was to be tested as by fire in advance of any sermon or miracle or official intercourse with the people to whom He was to preach the Word. When He triumphed, therefore, He shows us how we may win!

II.

"THE BETHLEHEM LEGENDS."

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be the Son of God."—Luke i, 35.

In these gracious and reverent words of the angel Gabriel, spoken to Mary of Nazareth, in that part of the Gospel which is known as the "Annunciation to the Virgin Mary," we find ourselves face to face with the central mystery of the New Testament,—the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The text may fitly serve to bring before us some of the essential truths and vital lessons connected with the Gospel of the Infancy of our Lord.

Among the recent attacks which have been made on the New Testament, some of the most vehement have been directed against the accounts given us in two of the Gospels concerning the supernatural birth

of the Savior. These assaults have come in some cases from clergymen and scholars who do not reject the Divinity of Christ, who accept the resurrection as a part of the indubitable record, who believe in some, at least, of the miraculous elements of the Book, but who find it difficult to accept what they call these Bethlehem myths and legends, which they assert have been added without just warrant in the course of time to the actual narrative of the Gospels. They further claim that they do not need to believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus in order to be convinced of His power to save; that without weakening the foundations of Christianity they are at liberty to remove these earlier portions of the Gospels from the place which they have occupied for ages, and accept Jesus Christ as a man, born like other men, but chosen and set apart by God for the supreme work to which He devoted His life. They urge the plea that the story of the miraculous birth, being found in only two of the Gospels, and not referred to by the Master Himself, and hardly hinted at by St. Paul, is not necessarily an essential part of the Gospels, and that we need not accept it in order to be orthodox believers. In view of these assaults, which are in the very air of this age of hypercriticism, and of so-called free thought and liberalism,

it may be worth while, on this Christmas Sunday, to suggest some of the reasons why we accept the narratives of the birth and childhood of Jesus of Nazareth as unquestionably true, and as forming a reasonable and credible and vital part of the Gospel history.

1. *And, first, let us think for a moment on this phase of the case, namely, that these stories of the birth and childhood of Jesus Christ in Matthew and Luke form an inseparable and integral part of those Gospels in all ancient manuscripts and modern versions.* Not one of the texts that have come down to us lacks these portions. No textual critic, skilled in the knowledge of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, has ever cast any suspicion on these early chapters. Wherever the Gospel by Luke has been found it has contained these wonderful first and second chapters with the account of the annunciation to Zacharias, the birth of John the Baptist, the annunciation to Mary at Nazareth, and the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. And so wherever Matthew's Gospel in any age has been found, the first and second chapters, with the genealogy, the vision to Joseph, the birth at Bethlehem, the visit of the Magi, and the massacre of the infants by Herod, have made up its opening portions. Critics have no right whatever, on textual grounds, to reject the early portions thus

found in these Gospels as unhistorical. They might just as well thrust out of the story the Sermon on the Mount, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the Crucifixion. These are all found in the same documents, and they form an invariable part of the original documents. The fact that Mark does not mention the miraculous birth may be accounted for by the intentional brevity of his work; he devotes only two verses to the temptation, when two of the evangelists give that incident a dozen verses. Mark evidently intended to give a short, terse, running account of the ministry of Jesus, and he leaps at once into the opening of the ministry of John the Baptist, omitting all the record previous to that event. And as John's Gospel evidently aims to supply what the other Gospels had omitted, nearly all of his work is new. But when he says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," is it not clear that he affords us in those words a vision into his own conviction and belief concerning the supernatural birth of the Savior?

2. *When we compare the sober, reticent, delicate, and beautiful story which Matthew and Luke give us with the fanciful, grotesque, and coarse myths and legends to be found in the apocryphal Gospels, we see at once the difference between the two.* The nar-

ratives of Matthew and Luke are reverent, pure, sweet in their odor as the lily of the valley, as radiant as the dawn of the morning. The mysteries of birth, childhood, motherhood, are dealt with in a spirit of purity, faith, and reticence, from which all morbid curiosity, all unseemly thought, all irreverent conjectures, all ignoble suggestions, are absolutely shut out. But in the apocryphal productions, made up of wild, absurd, silly, and ofttimes monstrous stories, which gathered in the course of time about the traditional life of Christ—the offspring of Oriental mysticism, credulity, fondness for marvels, the wonder-mongering tendency of the dreamy Eastern world,—we pass at once into a different realm. There marvels are multiplied, and all sorts of weird, supernatural, and magical performances are palmed off as though they formed a part of the actual Gospels. For example, take one specimen. In these apocryphal productions we have several chapters devoted to the infancy and childhood of Mary, the mother of our Lord. She is said to have taken seven steps alone when she was six months old, and while she was yet a little child she was, so the fable runs, held in admiration by all the people of Israel. The story goes that "when she was three years old she walked with a step so mature, she spake so perfectly, and

spent her time so assiduously in the praises of God, that all were astonished at her and wondered. She was not reckoned as a young infant, but, as it were, a grown-up person of thirty years old; for daily did she enjoy a Divine vision, daily was she visited by the angels of God, who were often seen speaking to her, who ministered to her, diligently obeying her, and who surrounded her day and night. She dwelt in the temple of the Lord and received her food from heaven from the hands of the angels." This stuff reminds us of the Arabian Nights' stories, but not of the sane, well-balanced, and reverent narratives found in Matthew and Luke.

In the stories of the Infancy of Jesus retailed by these apocryphal Gospels the contrast becomes even more striking. Three suns are said to have appeared in the heavens in Spain on the day of His birth as a sign of the Trinity; the very animals adored the infant Jesus in the manger; and soon after His birth He is said to have spoken and said to Mary, "I am Jesus, the Son of God, the Logos." At the same moment the idols in Egyptian temples are said to have fallen from their pedestals and been broken to pieces, and the images of heathen deities in Persian temples are declared to have conversed one with another and to have uttered words of prophecy and

praise. The child Jesus is pictured as performing all sorts of miraculous pranks, working wonders day by day. The gold which the Wise Men brought as a part of their gift to the manger at Bethlehem is said in these legends to have been carried by Noah through the flood in the ark, buried with Adam in Jerusalem, coined by the father of Abraham, paid out in the form of coins for Joseph when sold as a slave in Egypt, and finally brought by the Queen of Sheba as a part of her tribute to Solomon, and then, finally, having been taken away five hundred years later to the Far East at the time of the captivity, it came at last into the hands of the Magi!

These instances, typical of the legendary, wild, uncouth, and irreverent accretions which gathered about the Gospel story, as barnacles attach themselves to a ship, suggest the difference between them and the sweet, pure, blessed narrative of the Childhood given by our own evangelists, Matthew and Luke. No man with any discernment, no child even who has learned the difference between Æsop's Fables and the multiplication table, between Mother Goose's rhymes and Longfellow's Evangeline, can fail to see at a glance the radical contrast which exists between the apocryphal and the genuine Gospels. The account which our own Gospels give us

is sober, noble, elevated, and reverent; the others are silly, puerile, sometimes ghastly in their coarse realism, and all the while on a level infinitely below the record of the four evangelists. If you want to know the difference between the Gospels on the one hand, and the crude, commonplace efforts of mystical, credulous, and superstitious writers on the other, take up any one of the Gospels which we have in the New Testament and read a paragraph anywhere in them; then turn to these apocryphal writings and read a paragraph. *Instantly you feel the difference!*

It has thus happened that the heretical, Gnostic, hostile, skeptical, and other apocryphal Gospels constitute, by virtue of the contrast which they suggest, a remarkable testimony to the unique and inimitable Gospels which we call our own. Just as you can tell the difference between the crooked and awkward drawings of a child and the sure, clear, artistic creations of an artist; between the rude janglings of an untutored hand on the piano and the confident and trained touch of a master; between the harsh and discordant voice of the street peddler and the lofty and inspiring tones of a Nordica or a Patti,—so you can tell almost at a glance the difference between the actual Gospels and the ancient myths and legends

and fairy stories and Oriental tales which were written in imitation of them. Comparing the two, we turn from the false gospels in amazement and disgust; we approach the others in candor, reverence, faith, and adoring love. Reading these genuine accounts of the Holy Childhood, we can see new meaning in the Apostles' Creed, repeated in many tongues and in almost all lands for sixteen or seventeen centuries: "And I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary."

3. It may help us further to understand this truth now under consideration if we reflect on the *fact that these pictures of the superhuman origin and birth of our Lord help to make His whole career harmonious and complete.* When we think what He has done in the world and what He is doing to-day, we may find in the account of His Divine childhood a revelation of His character and mission which coheres logically with the rest of the history, which is consonant with the other incidents in His life; which fits into its exact place to make a unified, beautiful, and reasonable narration. Were He any other Being than the Ruler of the modern age, the Creator of its noblest ideals, the Head of the Church militant and the Church triumphant, the Master Teacher of the

centuries, the case would be different. But when we behold Him in His enthronement to-day in art and literature and morals and in governmental ideals and legislation; when we recall what marvels He wrought when on earth, and what moral and spiritual transformations He is making in our own time,—does it not seem consonant with these facts that we behold Him born of a Virgin, and coming into the world with a Divine inheritance and lineage such as no other Being ever had? To such a Being miracles seem fitting and inevitable; it was impossible—so says the Apostle Peter—that death should keep its hold on Him, and when we see Him walk the sea, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, and at last conquer death by His own resurrection, we may sanely and rationally say, It behooved such a Being to enter and to leave the world as no other man ever did. The wonder would be greater were we to find that He was simply a man like other men, with the same descent and the same end,—and yet the Master of mankind. The angelic visits to Mary of Nazareth, the song of the angels in the sky, the worshiping shepherds, the adoring Wise Men, the visions in the night, and the guidance of the star,—all these seem congruous elements in the narrative when we realize who He is of whom these incidents are related.

When we believe in His gifts of healing and His power to quell the storm, and His resurrection from the dead, what greater marvel remains in the whole story? Surely we may then find that the details of the Gospel, first to last, are harmonious; that they belong to and fit into one another; that the symmetry of the life of Christ would have been marred, and the beauty of it depleted of some of its elemental charms, had the account of the infancy at Bethlehem, in Egypt, and at Nazareth been left out. When there are miracles throughout His ministry, and at the end the crowning one, why halt at the fact that the story *opens* with a miraculous birth, and with angelic annunciations, and other incidents fitly joined to these, and preluding them?

4. *Then consider how poor the world would be to-day without the Christmas beliefs, hopes, and habits, without the associations and practices of the season, without the songs which now belt the earth with gladness.* There may be some hypercritical folks in the world who fancy that they would prefer a Gospel which has no Christmas in it, no account of the Birth at Bethlehem, and no visit of the Wise Men. But for me, and for most folks, the Gospels would be shorn of one of their chief charms were these elements left out. Poets have found in these

incidents of the childhood their noblest inspiration; hymnists have translated the chant of the angels into human speech, and lifted the nations skyward as they have listened to the song. Recall that one masterly work of Handel, "The Oratorio of the Messiah," and then ask what the world would be without it. Recall the hundreds of works wrought out for Christmas music, and then remember that the composers in fancy visited Bethlehem in order to get their themes, and that they gained at the manger some of their noblest chords. How poor the world of art would be were there no Christmas, and no inspiration for painting in the story of the childhood! The noblest pictures of womanhood, the sweetest pictures of childhood, and some of the greatest paintings ever put on canvas have been suggested and wrought out under the mystic spell of these incidents of the infancy. Then consider how these events and scenes have enriched literature through the passing centuries, and how home life has been beautified and the experience of the believer has been exalted by meditations on the childhood of Jesus. What a loss would befall the whole earth were there no truth in the Christmas stories, were the whole thing myth and fable!

5. *But what is the inner meaning of this great*

fact at Bethlehem? What does it signify that angels sing in the sky, and shepherds adore and testify, and Wise Men make their offerings, and Mary keeps these things in her heart? What is the great fact, after all? The one mysterious, supreme truth here declared is, that the Infinite God has taken upon Himself a tabernacle of clay wherein to sojourn among men. Leaving His throne, His glory, His sovereignty, His retinue of angels, holding in abeyance for the time His infinite attributes, He deigns to live a life of poverty and toil among men, and has no place to lay His head. He undertakes to live the ordinary life of a man among men. He does all this, that He may give us a clear, apprehensible, and concrete picture of Himself. We can with difficulty think of God as a pure Spirit, without body or parts. We find it hard to conceive of Him without picturing Him as a Being like ourselves. We can not "take Infinity by the hand," or come face to face with One who sitteth on the circle of the heavens, or form any adequate conception of Him in whose hands are the deep places of the earth, who counteth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names. When we reflect on the truth that He is great, and greatly to be praised, and that His greatness is unsearchable, we sink in dust and ashes to the

earth, overpowered with a sudden sense of our own littleness and of His awful and unspeakable vastness and majesty and power.

Over against that revelation let us look at the representation of God which we have in the person, the character, the message, and ministry of our Lord. If you desire to know what the great God is, how He feels toward the suffering and the sinful, how He yearns over the prodigal, how He welcomes the penitent, consider Him who said when on earth, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. And looking up into His face as He sits on the throne, waiting till the day of His final conquest of the earth by His Gospel, we may fitly join with all ages and lands in uttering from the heart that ancient word of reverent and adoring worship:

"Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ,
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst humble Thyself to be born of a Virgin.
When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of God the Father.
We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge.
We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with Thy saints, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*"

III.

MIRACLES: THEIR MEANING AND FUNCTION.

"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did."—John ii, 23.

You are invited to give attention to the question of the miracles of the New Testament, especially those wrought by our Lord as written down in the four Gospels. These documents are interpenetrated, through and through, with the story of certain wonderful works done by Jesus of Nazareth, day by day, from the opening of His ministry down to its very close. Were the story of the miracles taken out of the Gospels these books would be left in shreds and tatters. It behooves us, therefore, particularly in view of the current assaults on the miraculous elements of the Bible, the fight that is going on against supernaturalism, to understand what miracles mean;

why we may no longer expect to see them performed; what their functions were in the Gospel story; and what ground we have in this day of question and doubt, this critical, matter-of-fact, prosaic, scientific era in which we live, for believing in them.

To define a miracle is no easy task. Many definitions have been attempted which are unsatisfactory. To say that a miracle is an act in violation of the laws of nature, or against the course of nature, or in suspension of the natural laws in force about us, does not meet the case. A simpler description of a miracle is this: It is an act or event, produced at the bidding or through the instrumentality of one who professes to bring a message from the Almighty, —an act which clearly transcends the known laws and operations of nature, and which is evidently beyond unaided human power, and which is done with the aim of confirming and substantiating the messenger's claims and the validity of his message. Thus it may be *beyond* and above nature, but not in opposition to it. It may be said to stand in the same relation to the ordinary operations of nature that a comet's visit to our planetary system does to the usual course of events with which we are familiar here. Now and then such a heavenly visitor comes within our ken. Whence it comes we do not know;

it does not follow a regular orbit such as the planets of our system do; it appears but for a little while, coming we know not whence, paying no heed to the orbits and motions of the worlds which whirl about our central sun, circling about him and then flying off into far distant space, but signifying to us that a new world has dawned upon our vision and then has passed beyond our sight. Thus the miracle now and then has appeared, with its own meaning, its own laws, unknown to us, and then it has passed away, leaving only the record it has made and the memory of its startling visitation. After centuries of ordinary transactions, reverses, disasters, successes, failures, the miracle flashes before us, impresses its message, substantiates the message of the One who perfoms it, and then for ages the usual course of events goes on.

With regard to miracles some people are staggered and halted by their conceptions of natural law. They say, The operations of nature with which we are acquainted are regular, governed by invariable law, and are not to be interfered with. How can God interpose in the midst of these operations of inflexible law by supernatural and miraculous interventions? Let us think of this a moment. Is it reasonable to fancy that the Creator would set up the machinery

of the universe, and set it adrift, so constructed that He would not be at liberty to do anything in it afterward except to keep it a-going? Would He build a wall about it and shut Himself out of it altogether? Is He tied up by His own laws? Is that reasonable? If He is not merely the mighty Creator, but also a loving Father, would He not be likely to leave Himself some leeway for His own loving mercy? Moreover, we are interfering with the operations of natural law every day. The law of gravitation makes water run down hill, but we introduce machinery and the operation of other laws which force it up hill. If I hold out my arm the law of gravitation tends to pull it down, but my will comes into play and I say, *Stay up,* and up it stays! Thus continually one law comes into play in human affairs in supervention of lower laws; one force supersedes and counteracts another force, and thus by human action the operations of nature are continually changed,—not miraculously, but still essentially and by the exertion of the human will. And shall not the Almighty be free to bring higher laws, and nobler forces, and superhuman powers into play when He seeks to win the attention, to awaken the conscience, to move upon the heart of the race? If God can not interfere with nature and nature's

laws, then He has made Himself of less account than the race He created!

Further, we may profitably recall the fact that our Lord made appeal to His miracles in His utterances from time to time as *tokens of His Divine commission and authority.* He said (John v, 36): "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." When the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus asking, "Art Thou the One that was to come, or do we look for another?" the Master responded: "Go tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." On another occasion he declared, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin, but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father." These are fair specimens of Christ's habitual appeal to His miracles as one of the grounds afforded for believing in His Divine claims.

Possibly we may get a clearer apprehension of miracles if we note the chief terms which are used in the New Testament to define them. At once we chance upon a significant fact; namely, that the word

signifying merely a wonderful thing is never applied alone to our Lord's healings or other great works. The term used in St. John's Gospel is "sign"—"the signs that He did." These works therefore were not mere marvels, not simply astounding events, but rather tokens of the nearness and help and interposition of God, indications that He had appeared among men with new manifestations of mercy. They were intended not merely to awaken a sense of the marvelous, to arouse wonder, to astound men's minds with a vision of something beyond their ken; but they were to serve as events in which men might discern the finger of God. This phase of the Gospel miracles differentiates them at once from all merely extraordinary events, scientific discoveries, juggler's feats, or magician's puzzling performances, which are intended simply to play on the appetite for the marvelous. When the Master performed a miracle He did it not to appeal to man's wonder, to make people gape and stare, but to indicate to them that He had come as their Helper and Physician and Lord. Miracles, then, are, first of all, signs of God's presence in the world. Another term is used in the first three Gospels—*dunameis*—from which we get our word dynamite, translated "powers," or "mighty works." This word indicates the putting

forth of extraordinary power, the bursting or breaking into the world of a new force, whereby at the bidding of a human voice or the touch of a human hand the deaf were made to hear, and the lame to walk, and the dead were raised to life!

Then note that these deeds were done, these wonders wrought by *One who was absolutely peerless among the teachers and prophets who ever appeared on earth.* Wonderful things done, apparent miracles wrought, without the accompanying credential of character, of doctrine worthy to be considered Divine, would not serve as a warrant for us to accept a message. A man might come forth in our day and do marvelous things, heal the sick, and change silver into gold, and overcome the power of gravitation, and he might claim that these were so many credentials of a heavenly messenger. But unless his character, his life, his doctrine, his message, commended him to our moral sense as also divine, he would clearly be an impostor. Miracles alone, therefore, are no proper credential of the Book; but miracles taken in connection with the perfect, sinless, exceptional Man who wrought them, warrant us in accepting them and the message which they accompany.

It is easy to discern the difference between the

mighty works of Christ and the so-called miracles of the childhood of Christ, and the jugglers' tricks attributed to Him in the apocryphal Gospels, and the alleged miracles wrought by the saints according to Roman Catholic legends. These, with hardly an exception, are not worthy to be named alongside of the mighty works of our Lord described in the Gospels. About these other marvels there is no dignity, no moral purpose, no spiritual meaning. Some of them are grotesque and coarse and even cruel; but the deeds done by our Lord, after eighteen centuries of scrutiny and ages of assault, still remain beautiful, noble, outbeamings of His own merciful and Divine nature, entirely worthy of Him and of the doctrine which they guarantee as Divine.

This aspect of the case, just hinted at, may be developed a little further; namely, that miracles were appropriate and inevitable when performed by Jesus Christ. He stands alone in the moral and religious world, fairer than the children of men. No other teacher can be fitly placed alongside of Him. He is, with increasing luster, the Light of the world. Men have been studying His character, His words, His life for nearly nineteen hundred years, and they are still finding in them new charms, fresh sources of comfort, growing reasons for loyalty and service.

He remains to-day undisputably the Sovereign in the realm of ethics, the Head of the Church, adored and honored as the King of kings and Lord of lords wherever His Word has gone. With His ministry came the inauguration of new ideals, the establishment of new institutions, the beginning of a new civilization. He Himself indeed has been called the greatest of all the miracles! Now was it not fitting that such a Man should do such works—that the Man who confessedly stood at the top of the human race, their Lord and Master, should be able to control the forces of the universe, lift by His mercy men and women from beds of suffering, smite with rebuke the foulness and violence of demons until they fled in dismay from His presence, and even in face of death and the grave exemplify His omnipotent power? Miracles to Him were as easy as breathing; they flowed from His nature like light from the sun. He was Himself apparently never surprised at them; He did them in as easy and simple and natural a way as common men did ordinary things pertaining to their daily life. It should be clear to every mind, therefore, that *miracles from Him* were appropriate, consonant with His character and mission, inevitable accompaniments of His ministry.

Further, the benevolence of Christ's wonderful

works can not be ignored when we fairly look at them. Nearly all of His miracles were wrought at the calling of human need, at the bidding of suffering or danger,—all except perhaps a single one, the cursing of the barren fig-tree; and that was a warning and an object lesson with a merciful end in view. He did no miracle of wrath or vengeance! In all of his signs and wonders therefore we see His compassion exemplified, His mercy revealed. He heard the moan of the leper, and replied by an act of healing. He saw the misery of the blind, and His mercy flowed out of His finger ends as He touched their eyes and they saw. He felt for the broken-hearted widow of Nain who was following her only son to the tomb, and He raised the young man from the dead and restored him to his mother. He heard the cry of dread and dismay from the blanched lips of His disciples when they, with Him in their boat asleep, were threatened by the waves, and He spoke and the waters heard Him and obeyed, and the storm became a calm. His heart was touched with the sight of toiling mothers, anxious and broken and weary, with their dying babes in their arms, and He put forth His hands and healed them. Thus the story runs day after day for three years. We can not even begin to study the meaning of the miracles

without coming to see at the very start that they have a beneficent purpose behind them, that they are surcharged with revelations of redeeming mercy, that they are so many unfoldings of the tenderness, the kindness, the gentleness, the healing sympathy which were lodged in abundant measure in the heart of the Redeemer. Not in His words alone did He reveal the mercy which He brought to earth, but in His deeds of healing, His acts of compassion, His miracles of benevolence. His mighty works were not mere exhibitions of power, displays of vast matchless control over nature, huge, majestic, colossal, but unsympathetic and without the touch of gentleness. Each of his miracles was a manifestation, an outflowing of His love. In each one He said, I have come to help, to heal, to comfort, to bless.

This linking together of Almighty power with the deepest and tenderest compassion is a striking feature of the Gospel revelation. Much of our pity is bound up in our helplessness; we see, and feel, and compassionate, and turn aside in grief because we can do nothing more. With Christ pity and power went together; Omnipotence and compassion were joined in His hand and heart; the gentleness and tenderness of a woman were united with the majestic power of the Almighty God. He never had to turn

away from His supplicants as the best and wisest and greatest of human beings must often do from those who are in suffering and need, and say: "I can do nothing more for you. I am at My wit's end. I have reached the limit of My power. In the face of your misery and danger and need I am dumb in despair and helplessness." Ah no! The Master never found a case so desperate as to baffle His skill, a man or woman beyond the scope of His healing ministry, a child so far gone that a word from Him would not quicken it into new life! His miracles, then, have this great lesson for us, that in Him all the kindly sympathies of our nature are intertwined with the administration of infinite power.

Another fact comes to light as we recall His ministry of healing. He was as much a great Physician as He was a great Teacher. Much of His time was occupied with the cases of people afflicted with all manner of dreadful diseases. People who travel in the East to-day come home with their hearts and memories full of indescribable scenes of human misery which they have witnessed in Egypt, in Palestine, and elsewhere on their journey,—beggary of the worst type, foul and incurable maladies affecting the eyes, leprous diseases of many sorts, maimed and deformed children, malformed beings who seem to be

simply so many horrible excrescences on the human race, and other monstrous exhibitions of disease and suffering, many of them peculiar to that climate and latitude. It was thus, too, when the Master was on the earth. Wherever He went He saw the same sights; He felt them all the more keenly because of His exquisitely sensitive nature. *He knew what these things meant;* He understood all the anxiety, the days and nights of torment, the hopelessness, the rage, the incubus of woe which diseases of this kind had brought into the world. But He was not baffled by them. He stood unafraid in the presence of this panoramic spectacle of suffering which passed before His vision day by day, and He said, "I will, be ye clean!" He thus became the establisher of the *world's philanthropy*. He set into operation a spirit of sympathetic care, of skill, of devotion to human need and suffering, out of which have come hospitals, asylums, houses of refuge, homes for the unfortunate, and all the varied array of our modern schemes of compassion, charity, and reform. All these have their root in our Lord's works of healing. What we call to-day "social Christianity," the work of the Church and of the Churches among the poor, the care of the insane, the betterment of the conditions of labor, the elevation of the degraded,—all this may

be traced back in good part to the example and influence of the *healing ministry of Christ.* By His cures He told the world that man had a body as well as a soul, and that disease and pain and sorrow were to be lightened and finally done away by His Gospel. It is still true, as Whittier has sung,

> "The healing of His seamless dress
> Is by our beds of pain;
> We touch Him in life's throng and press;
> And we are whole again."

There is still another aspect of Christ's miracles which we must glance at,—their typical character. They are types of His redemptive work on human souls, symbols of His renewing power as exerted from time to time upon the heart of the world. In this regard what beauty and meaning shine out of His mighty works! The healing of the blind meant not only His compassion exercised upon the unfortunate *then,* but the age-long exercise of His regenerative skill upon the blinded vision of our race. When Christ opened the deaf ear He shadowed forth His willingness and power to open the ear of the sinner in all lands and ages to discern the Father's voice and to hear the minstrelsies of the skies. When He made the lame to walk He suggested His ability to lead the feet of the crippled soul, renewed in

strength and re-created in beauty, into the path of life. When He cast out demons what else could He signify but that He was for evermore the rightful Sovereign of the soul, and that He could and would cast out the devils of pride and self-will and anger and greed from the heart of man? And when He raised the dead to life He pictured His power to quicken dead souls into life, to say to those who had been like Lazarus bound hand and foot and clad in grave clothes and buried under mountains of guilt and corruption, Arise, come forth and live! These indeed are greater marvels than the former. The work of lifting the ancient pagan world out of its idolatries and lusts was a mightier work than the quieting of the storm, or the raising of the dead. In this aspect the miracles have a perpetual significance and suggestiveness. We see in them a never-ending portrayal of the redeeming mercy of Christ as going on in the world about us,—eyes opened, ears unlocked, tongues unmuzzled, crippled souls reformed, dead souls made alive again! His miracles of healing are a pictured Gospel of salvation for all men, everywhere. The spiritual power of the Gospel, which is its supreme characteristic, is typified by the physical miracles wrought by the Master. These miracles foretokened the triumphs of His grace in

its operations on the heart and life of our race in all the ages of time!

Why, it may be asked, are such miracles wrought no longer? Why does not some prophet appear to-day who can quiet a tempest by a word, or walk upon the angry waves of the sea, or resuscitate the dead? Simply because these acts are no longer needed as credentials of the Gospel. They have done their work, achieved their mission. A candle is not needed when the sun is risen. This is noonday in the history of the scheme of salvation. Miracles belonged to a time when there was no New Testament; when Christ was showing what He was, proving His claims, demonstrating His Divine character and works. To introduce miracles now would be like asking a full-grown man, after his college course, to sit down to study a primer. The miracles are the primitive appeal, the primary lesson, the pioneer method of educating the race. They can not be enacted again! But in reality miracles larger and greater than those of the days of the Gospel scenes are being enacted day by day in our own time. The Master said, "Greater works shall ye do!" When men and women, hardened in sin, sold to the Evil One, are redeemed; when they are washed from their sins and turned into saints; when character is transfigured again and

again into the image of the Redeemer; when the whole face of civilization is changed by His Word; when pagan nations are made to yearn for His great salvation, and cannibals are lifted out of their savagery and sin into purity and holiness; when men and women are revealed on every hand, bearing the likeness of the Master and willing to go to the ends of the earth in His name, and crying as did Isaiah, Here am I, send Me!—these miracles of grace are really as much credentials of Christ's Messiahship, of His Divine claims, as any miracle that He wrought on earth!

There are some of you, perhaps, who have said, offhand, as a friend remarked to me but recently in regard to this theme: "Miracles do not appeal to me. I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord, and I try to obey Him; but it has never seemed of much consequence to me whether He did or did not do the wonderful things ascribed to Him in the Gospels. They appear to me to be matters of a far distant age, with which I am not concerned." Such a judgment in respect to miracles may possibly answer, for the time being, in the quiet of the study, or in the familiar and unstudied conversational fellowship which a man may enjoy with his fellow. But there comes inevitably an hour in human experience when the soul cries

out for a wonder-working Redeemer. The conception of Christ as simply a great and stimulating Teacher will not then answer to the agonizing plea of the heart, or quiet its insistent cry for help. When a man is toiling under the burden of unforgiven sin; when remorse weighs him down; when loss and sorrow and disappointment and heartbreak and manifold forms of misery assail him; when he is brought face to face with bereavement; when he is called upon to tread the declivities of life and to walk through the valley of the shadow of death,—then he feels his need of a Helper who is endowed with almighty power. Nothing short of that equipment will meet his needs. In view of the trials, the sins, the burdens, the griefs, and the temptations of life men are taught the value of the miracles of the Gospels as affording to them picturesque delineations of the manifold grace and helpfulness of the Redeemer of our race. Accordingly in such vicissitudes we may aptly cry out: "O Lord, I thank Thee for the wonderful works which Thou didst do when on the earth. Without them I would not dare to believe that Thou canst help me to the uttermost. I am glad that Thou didst heal the leper; now I see that Thou canst renew the vileness of my inner life! I am glad that Thou didst open the eyes of the blind;

now I know that Thou canst grant unto me power to see the invisible! I rejoice that Thou didst raise the dead; therefore I venture to bring to Thee a soul dead in trespasses and sins, confident that Thou canst restore it to spiritual life. It gives me new courage and hope to behold Thee walking the Sea of Galilee, and quelling the storm with a word; now I can understand that Thou hast power to quiet the tumults of my soul, speak peace to my tempestuous conscience, and quiet every stormy fear that sweeps over my sky! Comforted, encouraged, instructed by these gracious works which Thou didst in Thine earthly ministry, O Lord, I dare to come to Thee. In these wonderful works I see the truth that Thou art mighty to save, that with Thee all things are possible, that there is nothing too hard for Thee to undertake! Thou hast all power in heaven and on earth. Let Thy miracle-working grace be used, O Christ, in the work of creating in me Thy likeness, and making me Thy child, Thy servant, Thy soldier, to do and suffer Thy will, in time and in eternity. Amen."

IV.

THE TRI-LINGUAL INSCRIPTION.

"And Pilate wrote a title also and put it on the cross. And there was written, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This title . . . was written in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek."—John xix, 19, 20.

If you and I had been in Jerusalem looking for a King on the day of the Crucifixion, the man who is mentioned in the text is the last one we would have chosen. Like the other people that day, we might have hooted in derision at the idea suggested by the inscription over His cross. "That man a King; dying in shame and obloquy, without a friend; no crown except one of thorns; no throne, no scepter, no retinue, no palace, no possessions—that man a King!" Thus we would have commented and gone on our way. And, now, as if to show how mistaken human judgments often are, and how the noblest and greatest are sometimes rejected of men, and how a

real King can sometimes do without all the external signs of royalty, the redeemed in two worlds unite in singing:

"Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell or earth or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly."

To-day He is recognized as King of kings and Lord of lords. We may well therefore consider the inscription over His cross as signifying the extent and the character of His regal supremacy.

Pilate little thought what he was doing that day when he directed this inscription to be prepared and placed over the dying man. Perhaps he thought to affix a stigma to the Jews themselves by parading before the whole of Jerusalem the public declaration that this so-called criminal, whom he had reluctantly condemned to die, was the alleged head of their nation. He wanted to mortify and humiliate them! Maybe he had a secret conviction that the claim was not altogether a fanciful one, and that this Galilean really was entitled to a throne and a crown! When the Pharisees came and protested that he should not call Him the King of the Jews, but should write, "He said, I am the King of the Jews," he gruffly replied, "What I have written I have written." And so it stood, and so it stands to this day. Even the

malice and pettiness and spite of His enemies this King was able to use to His advantage. Accordingly the inscription intended in derision and hate became a world-wide proclamation of His majestic and regal greatness.

1. *Each one of the evangelists tells of this inscription, and each gives a different version.* Mark's is the shortest; it reads simply, "The King of the Jews." Luke adds two other words which help to make the proclamation emphatic: "This is the King of the Jews." Matthew puts in the name of our Lord, and his rendering reads, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." John's is fullest of all, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." There is really no discrepancy here. The essential element in the inscription was the proclamation of His kingliness, and that is made in each one of the four. Perhaps the fact that the inscription was threefold, and that it was of necessity differently couched in the three languages explains the difference between the various renderings. These variations, however, afford us a sample of some of the so-called discrepancies that diversify the four Gospels—simply so many varieties of utterance which always occur between several honest and well-informed witnesses, each of whom gives the account of an occurrence or the version of

a conversation as he recalls it. There is a personal equation to be reckoned with in the case; each man has his own standpoint, his own eye-and-ear impressions. And if the testimonies of the four witnesses in a court of justice cohere and coincide in the main, if they agree as to the essential points in the case, the minor disagreements are set aside as inevitable and immaterial. The unity and harmony of the Bible, as is evident in this case, are not to be found in mere verbal correspondencies. That unity is a substantial, a spiritual, an underlying and essential one.

2. *This inscription was written in three languages.* These were the great languages of that day and of all time. To all intents and purposes therefore *the proclamation was universal.* No matter where a man came from that day to witness that execution of these three men outside of the walls of Jerusalem, if he could read at all he was able to make out in the tongue which he was best acquainted with the fact that this man was called the King of the Jews. If he was a Hebrew he could read it in his own tongue; if he came from Greece, or from the isles of the sea, where the language of that country was spoken, he could still understand what the title meant; and if he was acquainted with the Latin

tongue, the language used in official circles, it was clear in that form of speech that this Man of Nazareth was announced in some fashion to be a King. To-day that truth is written in four hundred languages and dialects; it would seem as if this first proclamation of it on the cross had been intended to prelude the coming of the day when all speeches and languages and tongues and dialects should proclaim the kingliness and the royal authority of Jesus of Nazareth.

A world-wide announcement of the Gospel provisions—this is what we may see in this trilingual title on the cross. Years afterward an apostle wrote in regard to this scene, He tasted death for every man. He also declared that God would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The Master Himself before He ascended to heaven commanded His disciples to go, make disciples of all nations,—to go and preach the gospel to every creature. All this world-wide provision for human need and human sin was hinted at and announced in the inscription written over the cross. Forgiveness for the civilized man and the savage, comfort for the sorrowing in all lands, hope for the lost everywhere, light for darkened homes in all climes, and joy for the desolate in all latitudes and

all longitudes, salvation for the human race, in mountain or plain, in jungle or forest or hamlet, in city or country, on the continents or on the far-off isles of the sea,—this is the message of the title which Pilate wrote and placed above the cross where Jesus Christ suffered and died.

There are heartache and heartbreak everywhere, and here is set forth a panacea for the universal heartache of the human race,—this is the record which we find in the inscription. A missionary in Manchuria has recently written a book telling of his experiences and labors in that far-off part of the world for the past thirty years. One fact he mentions which may claim place just here. He says he has found among the Buddhists of that country men who have wandered far and wide, from shrine to shrine, from temple to temple, from sage and priest in one city to sage and priest in other cities, all with one aim—to find rest, to obtain inward peace. They have given away their possessions, inflicted upon themselves severe penances, gone upon weary pilgrimages, secluded themselves in caves in the desert, or in hermit cells in the gloomy and forbidding mountains,—all with one hope and purpose, to get rid of their burden of sin, to find something or Somebody, somewhere, who could appease their disquieted

consciences, disburden their souls of their load of conscious guilt, strike loose from their spirits the fetters of sin, give to them an assurance of hope and comfort in looking forward beyond the grave, and a power to face death without fear and to live a life of purity and victory here below. Their search has been in vain; they have found at no heathen shrine the peace which they sought. But again and again to such longing, forlorn, stricken, and despairing souls has come the message of the Gospel, uplifting them, renewing them, gladdening them, bringing them into conscious fellowship with the King. Thus in heathen lands to-day this proclamation made on the cross is being verified and fulfilled.

3. *This inscription was written in Hebrew,*—that was a significant and typical fact. In that tongue God's great revelation had been made to patriarch and psalmist, priest and prophet. It was the language of worship, of religion, of faith, of religious aspiration and hope. In this language the law was written, and the psalms, those songs of praise and rapture, were composed and sung, and the history of the chosen people was embodied, and the characters of the Old Testament saints were enshrined. It is a deep, vital, intense, and majestic tongue, full of pathos, of sublimities, of poetical and tragic possi-

bilities, of tenderness and terror set over in contrast one to the other. It is a tongue of great simplicity, strong in its fundamental elements, which was molded, developed, enriched, and utilized almost from its beginning as the fitting vehicle of revelation, as the instrument of religion, as the medium through which Divine ideas and ideals should be revealed to the world. It was fitting therefore that the inscription over the cross of Jesus of Nazareth should be written in this tongue, so that it might be read by Jewish spectators; but with a further intent and aim, —that it might be declared in this way that this Man thus crucified was appointed to reign in the vast empire of religion, that He was to be the Guide of religious aspiration, and the center of religious hope, and the object of worship, and the Ruler of the human heart, from pole to pole, and from age to age, until time should end. Thus written in the Hebrew tongue this inscription contained an implied prophecy of the universal triumph of the Christian faith over all other systems and creeds. Standing by that cross and beholding the proclamation of Christ's kingship in the ancient language of the Jews, we may say to ourselves—That means that the Crescent shall fall before the Cross; that Confucianism shall find in the New Testament a morality which shall supple-

ment and purify its ethical standards; that Buddhism shall abandon its monasteries and its asceticism and its myths, and embrace the Gospel of Christ; that Hinduism shall throw its idols to the owls and the moles and the bats, and accept Jesus of Nazareth as King, that the savageries and superstitions and debasements of cannibal tribes and the low-down races shall be overcome and abandoned, and that everywhere Jesus shall be enthroned and adored and worshiped.

4. *But this inscription was also written in the Greek language.* That was a significant fact which needs to be studied. That tongue was the *language of culture;* it was the medium through which the Wise Men, the lovers of wisdom in that wonderful land of Greece, had given forth their utterances to the world. In that tongue the orators of Athens had spoken; in that tongue her philosophers had enshrined their studies of the human mind; in it the poets and dramatists of the land had written their epics and their comedies and tragedies; in it in due time the Gospel had been and was to be preached, and in it the New Testament was to be written. It was in the highest sense the speech of the world of culture, of art, of poetry, of beauty. It was a singularly affluent, plastic, sinuous, musical, and symmet-

rical tongue, rich in adjectives, in methods of modification, in particles which shade off in the finest ways the meaning of speaker or writer. Like the pillars of the Grecian temples, solid as the rock and crowned with decorated capitals, the Greek language combined strength with artistic beauty. And in this tongue also the announcement that Jesus Christ is a King was made upon His cross!.

This fact was full of significance. It meant that in the peculiar realm over which the Greek tongue ruled our Lord was to reign as Supreme Sovereign. He was to conquer the wisdom, the art, the philosophy, the science, the culture of the world. He was to rule not only the heart of the common people, but the reason of the thinker and the brain of the scholar. He was to touch with quickening power the mind of the race, to stimulate to its highest flights the imagination of man, to rouse human genius to its loftiest achievements, and to extend His regal sway over school and college and library and museum and art gallery the wide world over. He was to impress everywhere the truth that man must love God with the mind as well as with the heart, that refined tastes and a disciplined intellect and increasing knowledge are a vital part of true religion, and that in the advance to be made by the human race—advance in

discovery, invention, enterprise, and all forms of intellectual attainments,—Jesus Christ was to be the acknowledged leader, pattern, and guide. This inscription in Greek was a foretoken of the age in which we live, in which Christianity has been planting schools and building endowments, and lifting up the poor and kindling beacon fires of enlightenment on all the farther shores of the globe, and opening up visions of human capacity and destiny surpassing the dream of the poet or the sage!

5. *This inscription, however, was also written in Latin,* and that fact had its hidden and mystical meaning. Latin was the tongue of the official world, in which edicts were sent out from Rome, in which the courts rendered their judgments, and the laws were enshrined, and the generals reported their conquests. *It was the language of law, of government, of power.* It represented Rome in its work of far-reaching exploration, discovery, and conquest. It spoke of that military power which had conquered the whole known world. In that sense it had a symbolic meaning, as we find it used on the cross to declare the kingship of Jesus of Nazareth. It signified that the world of law, of government, of civilization, the political realm, the realm of orderly life, over which Rome then reigned, was to be the empire

of this crucified Nazarene, and that in due time the laws and governments of the globe would be modified and revolutionized and transformed according to His will so as to represent His teachings and His Gospel.

How absolutely improbable that suggestion was, according to all human forethought and probability! This Man, cast out and despised and rejected, dying in grief and reproach as a criminal, despised alike by Hebrew and Roman and Greek—He is to reign far and wide, conquering prejudice, winning allegiance, leavening thought, capturing one province and one throne after another, until at last the glad cry shall go forth through the universe, The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. And that proclamation is being rapidly fulfilled under our own eyes. To-day two-thirds of the population and three-fourths of the earth's surface are under the control of the Christian nations. The ruling political ideas of our time are drawn from the Bible. The crucified Nazarene is already enthroned in the realm of law and government and political ideas. His Gospel has been the pioneer of human rights, creating the conception of individual manhood and worth, and opening up for the poor, the needy, the

destitute, and the oppressed possibilities of help and hope never known before.

6. *Only one man in all the multitude that saw Jesus die recognized by faith His true character.* In his dying agonies he heard the prayer of the Master for the men who were murdering Him; he beheld the self-poise, the patience, the composure, the peace, the inward serenity of this Galilean prisoner, and then he caught sight of the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth the King!" Then he recalled all that he had heard of Jesus,—His kindness to the poor, His miracles on the sick, His tenderness to children, His mighty power over death, His authority over demons,—and that helped to bring out the meaning of the term. He pondered it till the very word ran like lightning through his brain—Jesus of Nazareth—the King. To the eyes of faith the dying Sufferer seemed like a King. "If He is a King He must have a kingdom—somewhere beyond the gates of Death. When He comes to His throne, may I be remembered." And then he uttered the prayer by which he is immortalized in the Gospel, Lord, remember me! And this crucified and rejected King, fastened to the cross, dying in agony, still had strength enough to open the gates of Paradise to His companion in ignominy and pain: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!"

7. *Once more: the lesson is suggested that real kingliness is a matter of character.* George Washington was as great in the time of his defeats and retreats and poverty and humiliation during the long and almost hopeless struggle of the Revolutionary War, as he was when at the head of the new Union as its first President. Columbus was just as majestic in his long days of waiting and toil and wandering and struggle, as he was when Spain bowed at his feet and welcomed and fêted him as the discoverer of a new world. And Jesus Christ was as great and majestic and worthy when He hung a bleeding, stricken, dying man on the cross, as He was when weeks afterward He ascended to the skies to receive the rapturous praises of the heavenly hosts. He was a King of sufferers,—He was enrolled by the experiences of that awful day in the noble army of martyrs, He descended to the depths of human agony and woe, He felt the agony of desertion and absolute loneliness, He knew what it was to have His good name, His liberty, His life taken by force and fraud. And amid it all He was the supreme model of majesty, self-composure, patience, benignity. Kingliness does not consist in royal robes, in a splendid palace, in a golden scepter, in outward dignities and decorations. Kingliness is in the man, in the character, in the life.

One final word: How safe are they who are in the keeping of this King! He rules all realms; His sway extends through all worlds; He has conquered death and the grave; all forces and laws and armies are in His hand. Who can harm those who in loyalty and love have put their lives in His care? Prosperity and adversity, sickness and health, life and death, friends and foes, this world and the next, the body and the soul,—all are under His law and in His eye and hand. The prisoner may say, I am still under His care, in His own good time the doors will open and I shall walk at liberty. The sick man may say, I am safe in His hands; the dying may exclaim, Lord, Thou art my stay and my help; Thou didst taste death for me, and Thou canst save unto the uttermost!

V.

STRENGTH FOR THE DAY.

"Thy bars shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."—Deut. xxxiii, 25.

THE precious words which I have read form a part of the blessing spoken by Moses before he took his departure from the people whom he had led through the wilderness of Arabia to the borders of the promised land. In this chapter he takes up each tribe, one by one, and gives to it a specific and characteristic blessing. In this attitude he reminds us of the dying patriarch, Jacob, who in like manner on his deathbed called before him his sons, outlined their future, warned them of their personal perils, prayed for them, and imparted to them his blessing. In the later instance Moses in this passage deals with the case of the tribe of Asher, who was the eighth son of Jacob. Both the blessings I have spoken of assure him of a happy lot. Jacob said of him, "His bread shall be fat, and he shall yield

royal dainties." And Moses, to cite the entire blessing, said: "Blessed be Asher with children: let him be acceptable unto his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy bars shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." These forecasts of the tribal destiny of Asher were in part fulfilled when that part of Israel increased in numbers until it became something like a small nation; and when it entered upon its own inheritance in the land of Israel. It colonized and occupied the northern seaboard of the country, from Mt. Carmel to Zidon, reaching inland some twenty or thirty miles, and including a good proportion of fertile soil and many miles of territory suitable for grazing, fruit raising, and the culture of the olive. Indeed to this day orange orchards and groves of olive-trees and vast fields of wheat cover a good part of this ancient inheritance of the tribe of Asher.

The passage is difficult because of obscurity in the original, and yet perhaps the meaning may be made clear enough. Asher was to be happy in the esteem of his brethren, a sort of a favorite brother. He was to dip his foot in oil, in the sense that his territory should overflow with the fruit of the olive-tree; the royal dainties might well be considered to be the figs and oranges and other tropical fruits which grow in

abundance in his territory to this day. The words, "Thy bars shall be iron and brass," read in the ordinary version, "Thy *shoes* shall be iron and brass," and in that form are considered to mean that he would be provided with foot gear to suit the rocky hill country in which he was to live. A better rendering is that of the Revised Version,—*Bars,* a term applicable to the frontier region of the land which he occupied. His neighbors on the north would be the Phenicians, adventurous, warlike, brave, and inclined to be troublesome. Against them he would have bolts and bars of iron and bronze, great mountain barriers, for protection,—symbols of the safety afforded to him in his exposed position by the protection of the God of Israel. This brings us to the precious and most characteristic part of the passage, the wonderful promise given to Asher, and through him to all believers, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," clearly one of the most tender and comprehensive of all the gracious promises which God has given His people.

If a record of this promise could have been kept, what a wonderful showing it would make! What tears it has dried, what hearts it has comforted, what heroes it has inspired, what homes clouded in want and suffering and fear it has illuminated with hope

and peace, what martyrs it has heartened for their final testing hour! To the people of Israel it came with peculiar force in many an exigent time of danger and need. When they faced days of battle and peril, when their enemies pressed on them from every side, when their rulers proved incapable and wicked, and their priests came to be hypocritical and careless, when they were defeated by their foes and led away into exile, and afflicted in a strange land,—and in many another vicissitude of trial and care and national misfortune there came to the faithful of the land this blessed promise, As thy days, so shall thy strength be!

But the most effective ministry of the passage has been, doubtless, not to the nation as a body, but *to the individual believer.* What vast multitudes of faithful and believing men and women this passage has consoled in sorrow, and encouraged in want, and built up in adversity; what prisons and hospitals and asylums it has cheered by its wonderful revelation of helpfulness and blessing; what orphans it has ministered to in their solitude and sorrow; into how many dismal midnights of desolation and poverty it has poured exhaustless sunshine; what cooling draughts of water it has brought to those who were dying in the hot sands of the

desert! What testimonies it has made possible! O, if all who have found this ancient text a fountain of comfort and of joy could speak, the universe would be vocal with their testimonies! Saints on earth and myriads more in the skies would join in saying, "My day was a day of darkness, this text filled it with light. It was a day of suffering, and by the help of this promise I passed through it without flinching; a day of burdens, and I was enabled to bear them; a day of peril, and my heart was filled with courage; a day of exhausting labor, and I was inspired with strength adequate to all its needs. We certify by all that we have and hope for that this promise is balm for broken hearts, and help for the defeated and the prostrate and the despairing, and life for the dying!"

The word day, as used in the text, is sometimes most fitly employed in the Bible and in poetry as a *symbol of the entire period of human life*. The Master, for example, applied it to the period of His active ministry when He said, We must work while it is day, the night cometh. Again the Wise Man says, In the morning sow thy seed, and at eve withhold not thy hand. And of one who had died in untimely fashion the Hebrew poet said, Her sun has gone down while it is yet day. It is a beautiful and an

appropriate symbol. Human life, like a day, has a dawn; childhood, with its gleefulness, and its perils, and its shortsightedness and need of protection, and of care. It has its morning; youth, joyous, songful, gladdening, hopeful. It has its noontide; middle life, with its growing burdens, and its new sense of responsibility, its fresh series of unexpected temptations and sorrows, its own peculiar assailments. It has its evening time; old age, with its infirmities, its benignities, its adversities, its failing strength, and its new hopes of immortality. So this precious promise has its striking application to the whole period of life under the figure of a day. As thy day,—in childhood, youth, middle life, old age,—so shall thy strength be! That is, God will proportion grace and comfort and help to the various experiences and vicissitudes through which His people are called to pass. They shall have seasonable help, succor in time of peculiar need, and whatever may be their trials and adversities, they shall have suitable strength to meet them.

This passage is peculiarly fitted to encourage and help the timid and self-distrustful to undertake the duties and start upon the profession of the Christian life. Many a man and woman looks with doubt and fear upon the life of the Christian, and says: "I am

afraid I could not hold out. The duties are so severe, the trials so heavy, the self-denials so many, the standard so high! I would not want to fail. I fear that should I begin I would not be able to keep on, and I would bring disgrace on the profession of religion." Thus like the slothful man in the Book of Proverbs they cry out continually, "There is a lion in the road. I shall be slain if I venture out." Life is often wasted by this policy, the years slip by and the time of activity passes with them, and no forward step is taken into the kingdom. Sometimes those who talk thus are conscientious, upright, and to an extent devout souls, to whom the public profession of religion has long been a bugbear. How encouraging and gracious to them should the precious words of the text come, As thy days, so shall thy strength be! With each temptation, need, trial, or hardship or peril, a full measure of strength and help will be administered. Be not doubtful, despairing, timid any longer! Make a venture by faith, and begin the new life!

A further application of these words to those who confront long and exacting periods of toil ought to bring help and comfort. Life to most people who amount to anything is a workshop, and not a playroom. It is a scene of taxing labor, of tedious and

endless and uninspiring toil. The question of bread and butter, of making provision for dependent ones, of getting a home, and of making the best use of one's time and gifts,—these must all be faced and answered. Sometimes a look ahead reveals no sign of a let-up in the case, no hint of an oasis in the desert of hard labor, no sheltered nook where one may retreat for a time; the whole horizon contains in large letters just one word manifolded everywhere—*work,* work, work. How can I stand it! cries out the overburdened toiler. A year means more than three hundred days of toil, ten years mean more than three thousand! Well, you could not stand it if by any process of compression these days were packed together, half a dozen in one; then you would give out. But you are to meet them one by one, and as each one comes it will bring with it due provision of strength and grace for its toils. Each day's duty well done gives skill and confidence and added force for the next one. We are to live by the day, accepting the task, the burden, the disappointment, the opportunity, as they come, assured that by this promise and other precious ones our immediate and daily needs will be met. Thus the toiler will have, day by day, strength for meeting his allotment of work.

The peculiar thing that is promised here is strength, one of the most needed and most precious of Divine furnishings. He shall *strengthen* thy heart, is the assurance given by the psalmist to those who have faith and hope and courage. St. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians began with a supplication for *strength:* "I bow my knees unto the Father—that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man." That, the apostle knew, was a radical need of all men. There are burdens to bear, temptations to meet, sorrows to face, responsibilities to carry, labors to be achieved, aims to be accomplished,—and for all these strength is the one thing needful. An overtaxed woman was once heard to groan to herself this prayer: "O Lord, make me as strong as a horse and give me two pair of hands, or I can not get through all the work that has been piled upon me!" Many another has felt like uttering perhaps a similar wish. Blessed indeed is the provision for our weakness, our toils, our hard driven faculties, in this promise that strength as the day may require will be afforded.

The promise furthermore hints at various sorts of strength that are required by the variety of human experiences. The strength to be imparted and

provided will be as varied as the needs of the day. To work hard, week in and week out, and find but little return for it—that requires one sort of strength. To meet without flinching some hitherto unexampled blow, of loss, or bereavement, or peril, or trial, and keep up courage and not lose heart or patience or faith—that needs another sort of strength. To be put by the divine order into a furnace of affliction heated seven times hotter than before, and to stay there, week after week, without complaining, hopeless of relief until life shall end—that calls for still another sort. Hence we may understand what the prophet means when he assures us that those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength—change it for each emergency, get a new sort of strength from the Divine storehouse of power.

> "For faith can make the desert bloom,
> And through the vistas dim
> Love sees, in sunlight or in gloom,
> All pathways lead to Him."

Then what comfort this passage contains for those whose brooding temperament or physical maladies make them prone to look on the dark side, to anticipate dismal happenings, to look into the future with forebodings, depressions, and overmastering anxieties! To this distorted vision there is always

something dreadful to happen just down the road—there is a swollen stream to swallow them up, or there are wild beasts lying in wait to devour, or numberless calamities just ready to overwhelm. O troubled soul, are you here to-day with your brooding, questioning thoughts, and your beclouded soul, your sky covered with darkness and the horizon everywhere betokening coming disaster? Your barometer always says, There 's a tempest a-coming. But God says to you if you trust and obey Him, You shall have strength for the days to come! The Master has warned us not to be overanxious about the morrow. Let these precious words quiet your alarms and calm your inward perturbations and gladden your sorrowing soul!

VI.

THE SOUL DAMAGED BY SIN.

"He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul."
—Prov. viii, 36.

My aim is to set before you two or three of the inevitable effects wrought by sin in the soul of him who cherishes it. To portray in detail the damages which sin works in human nature is a task which will require the revelations of the last judgment to accomplish. Only omniscience can discern in full the destructions of sin, as wrought in the moral character of the sinner. The most solemn word in our language is used to suggest and picture it to our thought—the word death. Sin means death to the human soul; death to its higher functions, to its peace, to its noblest possibilities; demoralization, overthrow, shipwreck, of all its powers!

In order to be definite, and bring my message within the limits of this service, I have chosen from the vast field thus opened up three phases of the

damage wrought by sin in the human soul, to which I invite your attention—three of the most perilous and insidious characteristics of sin's operations in the heart. Let us, without further parley, study them.

1. *Delusion is one of the first effects of sin, which has a deceiving and infatuating influence, clothing it with infinite peril.* A mere glance at the temptations—the typical temptations in the Word of God—will reveal this aspect of sin with startling vividness.

Emphasis is laid upon this phase of sin in many parts of the Bible. In Eden the tempter pictured with deceitful artfulness the attractiveness of the forbidden fruit,—"Your eyes shall be opened, ye shall see as gods!" The woman saw that the fruit was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, to be desired to make one wise;—all these phases of sin were set before the tempted one in that hour of danger. The same policy has been pursued ever since. Against it we are warned in all parts of the Scripture. We are told that Satan arrays himself as an angel of light, that he uses devices, wiles, snares; that his followers hunt men with a net,—that they set traps to catch men! St. Paul exhorts us lest we be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin—thus, through the Word God's messengers lift up the

warning cry of danger in regard to the delusive power of sin in the human soul, while it is said of Satan that he deceiveth the whole world,—and that he is a liar from the beginning.

No man can study his own heart, can exercise the slightest bit of wisdom in the inspection of his inner life without realizing that sin has a perilously fascinating power. It gilds itself with an appearance of value, it puts on a cloak of allurement, it assumes a saintlike halo about its head, it garbs itself with romantic, and picturesque, and beautiful phases, which make it full of bewildering danger. Who hath bewitched you? was the cry of expostulation of Paul to the Galatians when he found them drawn aside into certain forms of sin. The word was well chosen—sin is bewitching in the magic spell that it weaves about its victims. Achan, drawn by the wedge of gold, and the goodly Babylonish garments, in the camp of the foe, forgot under the fascinations of the spoils that he beheld that these were forbidden things—he saw only the glitter of the gold, the radiant and gorgeous colors of the robe,—and forgot all else.

The glare, the veneering, the gilt, the varnish of sin, constitutes much of its peril. If our eyes were always open to the deadly nature of sin,—if we

would remember its deceitfulness, its power to enchant, and bedevil, to put a spell on the reason, and derange the judgment, and entrance the imagination, and fool all our faculties,—the illusions, the charms, the mesmeric attraction of sin,—the weird, but dangerous loveliness of sin,—we should be safe. Against romantic and picturesque sins we have need to be on our guard, against the sins that appear palatable and alluring and beautiful—so that their deadly character is hidden. There is a "magic thrall" in them that is full of peril.

The fictitious literature of the hour is full of this sort of attraction. Sins that are as vile as leprosy, as venomous as a rattlesnake, as corrosive as *aqua fortis*,—that burn like fire, and eat like an acid, and devour like a wild beast, that are as rapacious as the grave and as relentless as death—are pictured in many a novel of to-day in bewitching colors, so as to seem harmless, delightful, full of lofty pleasure. The danger lies right here—the imagination is easily led astray. The glitter is specious, the colors are only cheap paint daubed on to hide the inherent, inevitable, ghastly ugliness of sin. We must be on our guard against sins that are artistically draped, and romantically disguised, and picturesquely fashioned. There is a deadly infatuation in them, there

is a mental and moral hallucination about them that is destructive to all that is noble and holy in the soul. Mazed, maddened, infatuated, is the man who allows himself to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

All the vices are of this sort,—all the doubtful amusements are of this kind. The danger lies hidden, in a subtle, æsthetic, romantic picturesqueness, that gives them their charm and their peril. It is said of the prodigal that he came to himself! He had been *beside* himself, in a craze, a delirium, a fit of madness. His experience had been a delusive, deceitful one,—his career had been one of infatuation. It is thus with every sinner! When Satan has placed before the eye of the tempted his glittering wares—has pictured the pleasures of sin,—hiding the fact that they are but for a season, when he has dazzled the imagination, and befooled the judgment, and blinded the eyes, and hoodwinked the reason, how he must laugh at his victims, how he must hold them in derision, when he sees them biting at all his baits, and greedily swallowing them down, without question,—hewing out for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water,—striving to fill themselves with husks, or crying, in view of their well-filled barns and overflowing fields, I have much goods laid up for many years,—I will eat, drink, and

be merry! How all the corridors of perdition must echo with the sound of demoniac laughter at the sight of reasonable beings, deluded, crazed, with the malignant power of sin! This, then, is one inevitable result of sin,—the entrance of delusion, infatuation, deceits, and fraud into the soul. Satan conquers by beguiling, by inveigling, and ensnaring his victims. He alone is safe who can say, "I am not ignorant of the devices of the devil!"

2. *Another one of the fruits of transgression is the benumbing of moral sensibility.* The apostle suggests, in one of his allusions to this phase of sin, that it first deceives and then hardens. He tells of those whose consciences are seared as with a red-hot iron, and of others who are past feeling. The types of character thus brought to view live among us to-day,—their consciences cauterized, their feelings torpid, their sensibilities frozen, their hearts like stone! It was reckoned as the climax of the sin of Israel in the olden time, that they had ceased to be ashamed of their iniquity. Jeremiah says (vi, 15; viii, 12), "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." And on account of their shameless spirit, their unblushing sinfulness, the judgment of God swept them from the

face of the earth. This soporific power of sin,—this power of putting the conscience to sleep, of lulling the reason into slumber, of soothing by moral opiates the sensibilities of the soul, is fraught with indescribable peril.

When the Master tells us that we must be converted and become like little children, this is one of His meanings, that our moral sensibilities are to be made tender, sensitive, and easily moved, that the heart is to be gentle and responsive to the touch and whisper of grace, that the soul is to be childlike in delicacy of feeling. This is the disposition which the poet had in mind when he wrote the hymn:

> "Quick as the apple of the eye,
> O God, my conscience make,
> Swift to discern when sin is nigh,
> And keep it still awake!"

The sinner needs to return to the moral susceptibility of childhood—to its plasticity, and sensitiveness.

Instead of seeking, however, more sensitiveness, the effort of many is to seek for means to stifle feeling, and render the conscience callous. That word callous has in it a meaning we may well ponder. If we chance to use a tool which chafes and abrades the hand, the worn skin becomes inflamed and keenly

sensitive for the time. In a little while, if we continue to expose the abraded surface to attrition, nature rallies to produce a thicker covering for the exposed surface—a hornlike cuticle,—a callous and insensible skin. In like manner the conscience becomes tender, under the operations of Providence and grace; but when these instrumentalities are refused, and despised,—if, in spite of warning and conviction and remorse, the man persists in his wickedness, then the conscience becomes covered with a calloused surface; the moral hide of the man becomes pachydermatous,—thick, like that of a rhinoceros; and at last he is hardened and set in his ways!

One of the common methods by which this is accomplished is the evasion and refusal of plain duty for a considerable length of time. Let God set a duty before the eye, and impress it upon the heart; let the conscience face it, and be impressed by it; and then wriggle, and twist, and evade, and excuse itself, and finally refuse to perform what God has placed in its path as an obligation—then will surely come this hardening of the moral nature, this induration of the conscience, this estate in which the feelings become obtuse, the sensibilities dulled, and the emotions iron-clad, and the whole nature is stricken with the blight of moral apathy.

The use of anæsthetics in surgery is one of the blessings of our civilization, but the use of moral anæsthetics, of spiritual opiates to deaden pain and lessen conviction and blunt the tenderness of the soul, is one of the most dreadful offenses which man commits against himself and against God. The lack of feeling ought to be a sign of alarm to the soul. "I have no feeling," is the *excuse* for not coming to Christ; instead of that it ought to be the *reason* for coming with the cry: "Renew feeling, give back sensibility, destroy this apathy, forgive this moral obtuseness, this insensibility to Christ and duty and the things that have to do with peace!" What folly to say: "I know I am a sinner; I am in theory a believer in the gospel; and I know that Christ is the only Savior; I know that if I die in my sins I shall be lost; I know that time is short, and death may come any moment, and that all my life ought to be dedicated to God at once—and yet I have no feeling, and practically I do not care!" These symptoms in the case of physical disease mean that mortification has set in—and that heroic treatment, the cutting off of a diseased limb, or the cutting out of a diseased portion of flesh from the body is the only way of relief. To be stolid and indifferent, in view of duty and danger, in view of Christ and His work in our

behalf, in view of what we are and ought to be,—is a dreadful crime. There are men who once trembled at the warnings of the Word, and grew alarmed as they thought of the future; and once in a while wept over their sins. But now their cheeks are brazen, and have lost the power even to blush; their souls are hardened, their hearts are insensible.

There are many grievous losses that may come to us—the loss of property, of health, of reputation, of fame, of friends, of children, of home—but the greatest loss is the loss of moral sensibility, the loss of conviction, the loss of tenderness, that comes from the smothering of conscience, the stifling of emotion, the benumbing of the powers that ought to be supreme in the soul. This estate of moral stupefaction and obtuseness, of spiritual apathy, of religious stolidity, is an alarming estate, indicating that life is almost extinct, that the rigors of winter, almost to death, reign in the soul!

3. *Further: Sin in the human soul is an element of moral weakness;* it involves the depletion of strength, the disintegration of the foundations of strong and virile character. The Psalmist, when he said, in his consciousness of sin, "I am as a man that hath no strength," only spoke the universal experience of the transgressor, who finds himself de-

moralized, weakened, undermined by his iniquities. Paul describes the condition of the ungodly as "without strength." He recognizes the fundamental need of the human heart in his prayer for the Ephesian Church, in which his first petition is that they may be strengthened with might by Divine power in the inner man. Our Savior also recognized the basal need of our life when He made His promise to His disciples and to His Church,—"Ye shall receive power." Strength, power,—these are crying needs, urgent wants of the human soul, in view of the weakness wrought by sin in all the faculties!

Strength is an essential factor of noble and complete symmetrical manhood. St. John said, "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, and the Word of God abideth in you." Strength, showing itself in a heroic purpose, fortitude in time of adversity, patience in suffering,—strength to control appetite, passion, and temper; strength that holds on its way undismayed by danger or temptation; strength that is equally able to endure and to fight, that is not afraid of the world, the flesh, or the devil,—this radical quality, this fundamental element in noble character, is overthrown and disintegrated by sin. The backbone is the essential feature of vertebrates,—

marking them off from a vast multitude of meaner and weaker animals. The first vague, structural promise of a backbone,—a mere anatomical hint,—that appeared countless ages ago, foreshadowing the appearance of a vertebral column in due course of time,—was a prophecy of coming greatness. When that structure actually appeared it became at once a sign of superiority in the animal creation, which reaches its culmination in man, the crown and climax of the vertebrates.

There is, however, in character, as well as in the body, a backbone, against which iniquity exerts its damaging work. Sin attacks the spinal column of moral manhood, and eviscerates its very marrow, reducing man from an upright being with a vertebral structure, to a creature prostrate and groveling and molluscous,—in intellect and conscience an invertebrate! Souls that were intended to have and develop the capacity of giants, of heroes,—are reduced to dwarfs and weaklings by sin, which brings enervation into every faculty, breaks down every power and debilitates the whole man! Sin means the evisceration of character, the emasculation of will-power, the depletion of courage, the disintegration of purpose, and the collapse of manhood! In the gospel the paralytic, helpless, prostrate, lying

speechless and fainting on his couch, borne by his friends to the feet of Jesus, is a picture of the dismantled estate into which sin brings the human soul. The man with his right hand withered is another type of this moral decrepitude, this withering and blighting of the soul by sin,—the executive power, the hand that works, the most useful and helpful of all the organs, stricken into uselessness and impotence!

Grace brings health, strength, and beauty to the soul, but sin involves demoralization and disintegration to all the elements of manly and noble character.

In one word,—Sin deceives, benumbs, and dismantles the soul!

Nor is this all. Were the preacher to complete the story, he would tell you of the imagination defiled, degraded, turned into an instrument of corruption and vice; of the heart inflamed with the love of sin; of the desires enamored of sin; of the enslavement of every faculty, the debasement of every power! He would tell you of the wretchedness and the despair which at least occasionally come to the soul when, by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, it is made conscious for the time of its danger, its guilt, its lost estate, its high lineage, the nobler nature of which it is made, the higher destinies for

which it was created, and the plight into which it has fallen! He would tell you of the hours of battle in the human soul when fear darkens every window, when remorse fastens its tooth into the quick of the conscience, when despair broods with stifling power over every faculty, when the ligaments of strength are hamstrung, and the wings are all clipped by which we were made to fly, and when a desperate conviction of servitude, of degradation, of doom, fixes itself in the oppressed and benighted heart. Even then one would fail to give you any adequate idea of the damages wrought by sin in our nature, damages which are irreparable but for the reconstructive grace of the Gospel!

When the Roman Empire was overrun by the Goths and Vandals centuries ago, destruction of works of art—the accumulation of ages of industry on the part of the great architects and painters and sculptors of preceding ages—marked the progress of the invading barbarians wherever they marched. With mace and ax, with spear and battering ram, they defaced, desecrated, and demolished the choicest buildings, the noblest pictures, the most splendid statues! Their march through Italy was made memorable by the appalling work of destruction which attended every foot of their journey. Cathedrals

were sacked, art galleries were pillaged, museums were destroyed, and the most beautiful sculptures were broken in pieces with ruthless hand.

All the artists that followed that age of devastation could not have reproduced the priceless artistic treasures that were broken and burnt.

But what was that havoc compared with the destruction wrought in the soul of man by sin,—God's image marred, moral fiber corroded and destroyed, heroic capacities and faculties wasted and degraded; sin, with torch and ax, laying waste, cutting down, blighting, ruining, the noblest creature that God has made—man created in His own divine likeness,—disfiguring and destroying moral manhood and womanhood, so that the soul which was made for communion with its Maker, and for loyal service to its Lord, becomes a prodigal and an outcast, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope in the world!

VII.

GOD'S SIGNALS FOR A FORWARD MOVEMENT.

"And it shall be, When thou hearest the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then is Jehovah gone out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines."—2 Sam. v, 24.

THE incident in the midst of which these words are set is so short and simple, that we need be delayed by it but a moment. David was waging a campaign against the savage and inveterate foes of Israel, the Philistines. When he had marshaled his troops and arrayed them for battle he did as many another great general has done, he took his case to the headquarters of the universe, and besought direction and help from the Almighty. As we see this great warrior kneel in prayer before he engages in battle, we think of Joshua, the leader who colonized Canaan; and Cromwell, who taught his armies to

pray as well as fight; and Havelock, noted alike for gentleness of character, power in prayer, and skill on the battlefield; and Stanley in Darkest Africa. None of them felt that they could get along without prayer. David on his knees pleading—and David at the head of his troops fighting—the two pictures go together. They match and supplement each other. They tell you to take your plans and your work to God. Shape the plan of battle; organize your forces; exercise all your wits, use all your energies, command all your resources for your enterprise, but before you venture forth to strike commend yourself and your life and labor to the Captain of your salvation. Seek for His blessing and sanction and direction. Lay your sword at His feet, on His altar first, and then you may go forth to battle, crying as of old, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

But, to return to David,—in answer to his prayer the words of the text and context were spoken, telling him to move in a circuit, opposite certain mulberry-trees. Then he was to await the "sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees:" when he heard that he was to bestir himself. That sound was to be to him a sign that God was on the march against the enemy; that the hour was come for heroic action; that the opportune moment to strike a decisive blow had arrived.

David obeyed the command, and won a great victory. What that sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees was, nobody can tell. It may have been the movement of angelic armies, poised in the viewless air; it may have been simply the rustling of the leaves at daybreak as a sign to David of God's watchful and helpful presence in that exigent hour. But the words and circumstances combined may be framed into a fit lesson for our day. "The sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees" may be taken to symbolize any striking interposition of God in human affairs. When you hear that sound,—in the heart, in the church, in the home, on your journeys, in the affairs of the nation—then bestir yourself! Then is the special time to work. That is the opportune, critical, exigent, all-deciding hour for thee. Watch for such times, and when their light dawns upon thee, and their clarion call sounds in thine ear, then with all the energy of thy soul, bestir thyself! Go out to battle and to victory!

1. This sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees *is often heard by a nation.* It sounds a trumpet call to a whole people to bestir themselves. It gives them a signal that God is interposing in a special way in their affairs. It awakens a responsive cry, a co-operative effort, an obedient and united

and heroic endeavor to accomplish a great work for the nation. For example, three hundred years ago when Holland under William the Prince of Orange was confronted by the armies of the strongest nation in Europe, under Philip the Second and the infamous Duke of Alva, what was it that united the Netherlands into one solid phalanx, so that men, women, and children, in the inspiration of the hour, cried out: "Our lands may be laid waste by the sea, our cities scourged by the pestilence, our homes be destroyed over our heads, and ourselves slain on the battlefield or starved to death in our fever-smitten, famine-stricken besieged cities; we will meet death in his most frightful forms, but we will *not* submit to the tyranny of Spain and allow her to gag our mouths and straitjacket our consciences, and stultify our reason!" What, I say, was it that roused this little nation to such a pitch of fortitude and courage in that hour of poverty and trial? It was the conviction that God was with them, that they were fighting His battles for religious freedom and the rights of conscience. They heard the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, and bestirred themselves. And in later struggles for human rights the same principle holds good. When two hundred and fifty years ago the English people rose up in their majesty and smote down the mon-

arch who had arrogated to himself the absolute power to rule, settling forever the principle that the representatives of the people, and not the scepter and the throne, constitute the supreme power in the land; when a century ago the American Colonies established by their Revolution the right of a Republic to live; when, in a later day, the nation, after four years of war, determined that the Union was built to last forever, and when in the same conflict the people became inflamed with the thought that freedom for all men, of all classes, races, and conditions, must be established by the sacrifice of the slain—in all these revolutions there was the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, a revelation of the divine agency and ruling power among men. One of our poets has put this thought into one of our most glorious poems:

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watchfires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps;
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
'As ye deal with My contemners, so with you My grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with His heel,
Since God is marching on.'

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat.
O! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on."

2. Again, this sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, this revelation of God's presence to His workers, *is manifest to-day in the missionary world*. Never in all the ages of the past has God so plainly spoken to His Church, "Go forth and conquer in My name." Walls of separation broken down, gates closed for centuries now wide open, the hermit nations of the Orient coming out from their seclusion and welcoming Christian civilization, the Bible translated into all known languages, the Dark Continent lighted up with beacon-stations kindled in the wilderness by the advance guard of Christ's marching army, hundreds of young men and women

catching the inspiration of the hour and crying out in response to the call for workers, "Here am I, send me,"—these are only a few of the signs of the times which make this the supreme missionary age of the world. The call that comes to us from these providential signs and tokens is a bugle-shout: O Church of Christ, the hour has come for one grand advance movement all along the line! God has opened the way, and now He says, Bestir thyself. Enter these open doors. Evangelize the people at your gates, on your plains, along your coasts, but stop not here. Evangelize the world.

"The whole wide world for Jesus;
This shall our watchword be;
Up on the highest mountain,
Down by the widest sea."

3. *The dawning, ripening sense of responsibility that marks the turn of youth into manhood* indicates one of these critical moments. It comes to many a boy with a sharp and ominous suddenness. After the frivolousness of his teens, the playday and the heyday of his school-life, the careless, gleeful hours of childhood and frolics of youth, there comes one day a suddening awakening. He says, with awe and mingled sorrow and joy: "My childhood and youth are gone. My days of play and sport are over. My

school-life is at an end. I am a man. I can never more plead the 'Baby act' to relieve me from responsibilities. The law has reckoned me an infant till this hour, and under its eye my father has been accountable for my conduct. But now I am a man, with a vote, and a name, and a character that are my own. My life is to be what I may make it. With all its sober realities, with all its labors and responsibilities, with its grip on eternal issues, life is before me!"

Young man, young woman, standing at the turning point which separates you from childhood and youth, that quickened sense of accountability within your newly disturbed conscience is God's voice. Walk softly—it is the touch of God's own hand upon you to admonish, to guide, to save. It is the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, bidding you bestir yourself. With tremendous earnestness, with indomitable resolve, with heroic endeavor, use your new-found energies in the work to which you are assigned. The morning hours are golden—use them wisely and well, remembering that the night cometh, when no man can work.

4. *The hour of any striking and peculiar providence in your life* may be reckoned as a special time when, according to the text, God calls on you to bestir yourself!

Your life may go on for months at a smooth jog-trot. Nothing startling may occur; all things move evenly, monotonously, without a jar. You become, in Scriptural language, settled on your lees, or to change the figure, at ease in Zion. Smooth sailing, quiet seas, no storms, "all quiet along the Potomac" of your life;—when suddenly you are roused by the storm. Financial loss or entanglements embarrass you; one of your mental faculties, or some of your physical powers, which you fancied were cast-iron, threaten to give way; sickness lays you low, and gives you a chance to see how empty and hollow some of the things are which you thought were worth so much; one that you loved better than life is smitten down by your side, and like a bird with broken wing you flutter, bleeding, crippled, praying for death, on the earth by the edge of a new-made grave,—a blow of some kind comes upon you that is grievous to bear, under whose weight you stagger to and fro; an arrow from the Almighty transfixes you, and the hurt takes hold of your very soul. An alliance is formed or planned, in which your interests and your very life are interwoven. A friendship is made that binds you in sympathy to a kindred spirit, or bonds are broken that almost wrench your soul in twain in the agony of separation. A

child is born into your home, or one is transplanted to the heavenly home. These are some of the occasions when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees; some of the times when God by His providences commands you to bestir yourself.

Such events are exigent and opportune moments. Each one of them is a crisis in your history. Brood not over your losses; despond not at your adversities; rebel not in view of your bereavements; lose not courage in the hour of danger and trial, but rather bestir yourself into new activity. God knows just what you need, how much you can bear, and what path to lead you through. His providence is no hit or miss, random, chaotic operation. He can make all things work together for your good, if you trust Him. In these critical hours of your life realize that it is God who is guiding, overruling, interposing, governing, in your soul. By these startling, revolutionizing, overturning operations he is sounding an alarm, making signals of danger which you are to heed.

Take an instance: Job the patriarchal model of patience learned this lesson. Behold him in plenty and in peace, his flocks and herds on every hill, the sound of song and merriment saluting his

ear on every breeze from the homes of his children settled around him, revered for his wisdom and integrity, and beloved for his kindness to the poor. Job, in health, riches, peace, and comfort, a chief in his tribe—that is the first picture.

Then the scene changes. Now behold him—property all swept out of existence by cyclone, fire, flood, and war; children murdered, lands all laid waste, his body afflicted with a nameless and dreadful scourge that made life a living death, his wife turning against him and crying out, "Curse God and die;" his neighbors coming to sympathize with him, and under the guise of their comforting visit taking occasion to accuse him of having been false-hearted all these years; condoling with and counseling him in this fashion: "Job, you old sinner, you know you 've been a hypocrite, or God would not punish you so terribly. He is scourging you for your secret wickedness. You have been a crafty, shrewd old scoundrel. Now, own up, confess your hypocrisy, and God will forgive you." That is the picture of Job in his trials and sorrows. What did he do? Why, he recognized the hand and guidance and power of God in his afflictions. He heard in the storm and the whirlwind and the messages of successive disasters that smote his ear the sound of

marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees. He cried out: "I can not understand these griefs and losses. I do not know why I was born to suffer in this fashion. The sky is black above me, and I can see no ray of light through the clouds that envelop me. But one thing I know: Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job heard the sound of God's footsteps, and he bestirred himself to lay hold on God, and he came off more than conqueror!

5. *The time of religious awakening in a community* is in the highest sense a call from God for us to bestir ourselves. There are seasons for sowing and reaping in which labor counts and tells in the world of agriculture. Seed sown in the spring, grain gathered in the harvest—this is the rule from which there is no escape. So there are special, opportune seasons for religious ingathering. We are indeed to work in season and out of season, we are not to get weary of well-doing; but in the hour when in a special way God moves among the people, when unusual interest is taken in the services, when sinners become awakened, and careless men and women are alarmed, and the Word of God takes hold with power upon the hearts of those who hear it—in such

signs of divine activity we may hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees. God is working among men and calling anew to saint and sinner, "Bestir thyself!"

And now, brother-man, let me urge upon you this final truth, that the hour when the Gospel message comes home to you, singling you out from others, individualizing you from your fellows, is a turning point in your life. When the Scripture, read in solitude, searches you with its commands, its warnings, and its examples; when in the sanctuary the words of the preacher reach your conscience, disturb your ease, induce a longing for pardon, extort from your broken heart the low, faint, hungry cry, "O that I knew where I might find Him," bring you face to face with your sins, with all the wastes and follies of your past life, and make you to realize your wretchedness and danger—that to you is an hour fraught with momentous issues, of life or death. "The sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees" comes to thy soul, and cries, "Bestir thyself! This is the accepted time; this is the day of salvation; this is the proffer of reconciliation through Christ!"

I heard a minister, sojourning in the Lake Region for a few days, preach in the little chapel on the

Island of Mackinac. As he ended his effective sermon he told this incident: "A little over twenty years ago, in the city of Chicago, I went one morning into a counting-room to transact an item of business. I found the young man whom I sought at his desk, finished my work with him in a few minutes, and started to leave. He was not an intimate friend, we had not met very often, but each of us had been a soldier in the Union army, and that gave us a sense of comradeship. As I turned the young man called me back and said, "Charley Morton, are you a Christian?" I was nettled at being called to account with such abruptness, and I answered curtly, as though I was going to settle that matter in short meter, "No, I am not." He replied with a kindly smile, "Are you in such a hurry that you can not afford five minutes to talk on this subject?" I was reluctant to stop, but I could hardly escape, and so I submitted and tarried, without a thought that that interview was to decide all my coming life. He simply told me his own experience, how he had found Christ, and how the Master was to him a sun and a shield, a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. As he spoke my conscience was pierced and my heart was melted, and I began to feel my need of salvation. I went out from that interview

without making any promise, or giving any sign of inward disturbance, but for days afterward I did scarcely anything else in my leisure hours but pray and search the Scriptures and seek for salvation. I found Christ, and began to teach and to preach His Word, and have been spending these years in His work simply because my friend in the counting-room was faithful in speaking to me the message of eternal life. Some months ago I attended his funeral. His work on earth was done, and as I stood by his coffin and looked on his clay-cold face, I said to myself: 'Charley Morton, you might have been still in the bondage of sin, you might have been in hell, but for the kindly and loving words this man spoke to you years ago.' The message he uttered was the Word of God to my soul."

That utterance, in that five-minute interview, was "the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees;" it was God voice entreating the prodigal son to return to his Father's house. Give heed to that voice, stop not your ears to that warning cry. When it reaches your ear and your heart, welcome it, for it means salvation, here and in all the ages to come.

VIII.

THE HEALING TOUCH.

"And being moved with compassion Jesus stretched forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will: be thou made clean."—Mark i, 41.*

1. The healing of the leper, described here, was the most *significant and representative of all the miraculous cures* wrought by our Lord during His ministry. The incident is full of suggestions: the case was a desperate one, as brought out in St. Luke's version of the incident; the man recognized in his approach and appeal the Master's regal dignity and divine power, and worshiped Him, uttering at the same time his adoring acclaim and petition, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." The Lord touched the dreadful body of the victim with creative and restorative power, and spoke new life into a frame almost ready for burial. Taken

* For the whole story of the healing of the leper, see Matthew viii, 2-4; Mark i, 40-44; and Luke v, 12-16.

altogether, we have a narrative unusually full of significance. Where else in all the New Testament are the saving grace and almighty power of our Lord set forth more clearly than here? Where else can we find an instance to illustrate the fact that He can save "unto the uttermost" more vividly pictured?

2. *The very name leprosy is saturated through and through with associations which suggest the hopelessness and misery of the disease* which for thousands of years has been recognized as the very synonym of repulsiveness and horror. And while to-day we have ceased to view the leper as in a peculiar way the object of God's vengeance or displeasure, yet this whole matter of the deplorable sufferings of the leper, his outcast condition, and indeed the typical character of his malady, have come home to us in our time in several ways. The Leper Colony on one of the islands of the Hawaiian Group, now a part of our national domain; the heroism of Father Damien, who gave himself to their service and died in order to help them; the fortitude of Mary Reed, who is carrying on her work among the lepers of India in her mountain retreat,—all these incidents bring the case down to our own door, and help us to realize what it meant to be a leper in the time of our Lord; they may help us also to

picture to ourselves the unspeakable wretchedness of the poor man who in the narrative with which the text is related came to our Lord for healing, and vivify some of the teachings of the story.

3. It is worth while to note that *the healing of the leper is the first miracle recorded by St. Matthew,* who seems to have singled it out as the one which ought to stand in the foreground of his Gospel. This evangelist segregates this particular exhibition of divine power and mercy from all the other cures wrought by our Lord while on the earth as the one which ought to rank first in the wonderful procession of healings. As Matthew's Gospel was intended primarily for the Jews, and was designed to set forth our Lord as the Messiah of prophecy, we may reasonably conclude that the evangelist had a purpose in this selection. First and foremost among the healings he wanted the Jew to see this matchless miracle,—the healing of a leper, the cure of a disease which had been reckoned from earliest date absolutely incurable, a disease which was deemed a special infliction of Divine wrath, and an unparalleled type of the repulsiveness and awfulness and hopelessness of sin.

According also to Matthew's version the healing

took place soon after the Sermon on the Mount. Perhaps the leper may have stood in the outskirts of the multitude, or may have been hidden in some adjacent cave, or may have stood on some knoll at a distance from the Master, and thus may have heard some of the utterances of that discourse. Perhaps it was that sermon, along with the reports of other healings of different sorts, which prompted and encouraged the poor wretch to venture into the presence of our Lord with his suffering and need. The scene, when we come to study it, is a memorable one. The Master has been teaching the people, and has ended His work when suddenly there is a panic in the crowd—just such a sight as would be occasioned on a busy street in our own time should a man all broken out with smallpox, or afflicted with the same dreadful disease as is mentioned in the Gospel story, suddenly appear among the people. Everybody would fly; there would be exclamations of horror, and a panicky flight from the spot. So, on this occasion, a leper brings his "tainted and unwelcome presence into the shrinking crowd." A man in a frightful condition, leprous from head to foot, as bad a case as can be fancied, his unkempt hair, his hoarse and gurgling voice, his bandaged

face, his rent garments, all testifying that he was an outcast from society, approached the Master, fell on his knees, then on his face to the earth, with the cry, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!"

And the Master recognized the appeal, touched the putrid flesh, healed the man, and sent him away rejoicing. This is the picture which we are to study.

4. *The social and religious isolation of the leper, as prescribed in the Jewish law, still has its lessons for the world.* Students of the Bible for many centuries have found in the desolate and abandoned status of the victim of leprosy a vivid and unmistakable symbol of the condition into which sin inevitably brings the human soul. Surely the scholars of all the centuries have not been in error when they have found in the Levitical prescriptions on this subject a most impressive series of symbolic lessons concerning the hideousness of sin in the sight of God. Look at the case of the leper for a moment from this standpoint.

Leprosy, for example, is singled out from all other maladies by the Levitical law, and treated after a fashion which is utterly inexplicable unless the purpose was to set forth this disease as an "out-

ward and visible sign" of the inward corruption which sin works in the human soul. It was a parable of death; the leper was a living picture of doom; he was literally, as an old writer aptly termed him, *supulchrum ambulans,* a walking sepulcher, an image of moral defilement and ruin whose utmost meaning no mortal can grasp.

There were many other diseases prevalent in that far-away age which were frightful and deadly; but this one was singled out from all the others as a malady which rendered a man ceremonially unclean. The very word itself means "a smiting;" even the shade of a tree under which the leper might tarry to repose his exhausted body was defiled; the victim of the disease, not only by public sentiment and human fear, but also by the statutes of the Jewish law, was ejected from all fellowship with his kind, and thrust out like a wild beast to wander alone in his misery and die far off from the habitations of men. There is no parallel to be found in the Bible to compare for a moment with the status of the ancient Hebrew leper.

Two chapters in Leviticus are occupied with directions concerning the method of detecting the symptoms of leprosy, and with definitions of the

penalty to be inflicted upon those who suffered from the disease. Listen to a brief citation from Leviticus (xiii, 45, 46):

"And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall go loose, and he shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, Unclean! All the days wherein the plague is in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his dwelling be."

Judged by our modern standards of philanthropy this seems inhuman; we do not allow even dumb animals to be thus treated to-day. Nevertheless we are blind if we look at the statutes in the case from that one standpoint alone. There is a lesson here which had to be enforced in a primitive age, and among a people just emerging from savagery, through what Bunyan calls Eye-Gate and Ear-Gate. There seems to have been no other way but this graphic and typical method whereby there could be set forth, so that even a child might understand it, the lesson that sin separates between God and man; that sin is hateful and horrible in his sight; that sin alienates the soul from heaven, and makes of man an outcast, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise. In the story of the Prodigal Son it is significantly said that the boy "took his departure into a far country."

That is a picture of the alienation always involved in the sinner's course. That far country was not only far from the father's house, but far from hope, and peace, and heaven.

Even from the sanctuary lepers were excluded; there was no altar to which he might bring his offering; there was no priest who might venture to minister to him in his degradation; in all possible ways the idea was stamped upon the victim himself, and upon society as well, that he was a hated and doomed thing, blighted with a curse from which there was no escape.

All this was simply a revelation to that age, and it remains in our time also a warning and a declaration, of the detestation and horror which sin awakens in God. This spectacle of the leper, an offense to the eye, blasted from head to foot, stoned and jeered at by his fellows, and thrust out to perish in the wilderness, is an object lesson whose meaning is still alive. It gives us a hint of the impression which sin makes upon the mind of the Almighty. It is as though He had said: "Sin is a scourge, a monstrous defilement, *it is like leprosy*. I can not abide it. The man who chooses sin, who remains in his iniquity, and cleaves to his rebellion, is estranged from Me, is shut out from My fellowship, is an alien and

an outcast." No wonder that Job cried out in his distress when a sudden revelation of the divine holiness smote him to the quick, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." And no wonder that Isaiah, appalled and transfixed with a sight of the King on His throne, fell on his face in confusion and cried, "Woe is me: for I am undone."

5. *The extraordinary faith of the leper,* in view of his desperate plight, needs to be emphasized. It has few parallels in the whole range of the Gospel history. This man as a typical believer deserves to stand alongside of the centurion of whom the Master said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." He may take rank with the Penitent Transgressor who on the cross had insight to discern the kingly qualities and divine authority of the Man of Nazareth. Is there, indeed, anywhere in Scripture a better illustration of the simplicity, the beauty, and the power of saving faith in Jesus Christ as One endowed with omnipotent authority, than we find here exemplified in the conduct, the confession, and the plea of the leper?

His faith becomes all the more remarkable when we note that *he was not brought by friends to the Savior.* No one cared for him; no one told him to

go; he was abandoned of all men, and in his hopeless estate there was none to help him. The paralytic was brought to the Savior by four of his friends; mothers carried their children to the great Physician; messengers flew across the plains and over the hills to ask relief for stricken homes and dying men and women. But for this leper there was no intercessor. He bore his case alone into the presence of the Redeemer. His faith was of the stalwart sort that can stand alone, without support on either side.

Then, too, consider what was involved in the appeal which he made: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!" Here was a recognition of the almighty power of Jesus of Nazareth such as no one else had yet shown. No mortal thus far in the course of our Lord's ministry had dared to dream that He could cure the leprosy. No precedent for such a healing had been set by Him. No prophecy was contained in the Old Testament covering such a case. No promise had been spoken by Him indicating that He was commissioned to achieve such a work. Later in His career He said to His disciples, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons," but hitherto no such work had been done by Him or by the apostles. Yet this poor fellow in his solitary broodings, in his

prayers alone in his filthy den, in his wanderings over the dusty hills, had finally reached the conclusion that this great Physician could do for him what no one else on earth could do—cleanse him from his malignant disease, and so he came to our Lord with his cry, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!"

His faith embraced the simple fact which the Roman centurion glorified when he intimated that Jesus Christ was the Commander-in-chief of all the forces in the universe, that He had but to "speak the word," and the sick man should be healed. Is there, after all, a simpler, or a more helpful, or a more blessed creed than this brief one, set forth in the spirit, the words, and the attitude of these two typical believers in the Gospel—this creed that in language which may be understood by a child, and which yet compasses the needs of the strongest and the wisest of mankind, cries out: "I believe in the almighty power of Jesus Christ?" That is the creed which has in it the secret and the motive force for the conquest of the world!

6. *And now look, finally, at the healing touch whereby the man was cured.** This is perhaps the most significant and memorable element in the pic-

*The paragraphs which close this sermon have been used in print recently in another form by the writer, although not under his own name.

ture which we have been studying, for the Master did not need to touch the leper in order to perform the cure. In many other cases of healing His work was done by a word alone. In two or three instances —the cases of a blind man, and of one who was deaf and dumb—the Master used His hands, and personal contact with the sufferer, apparently as much for the purpose of developing a co-operative faith as with the intent of showing His compassionate feeling for the ones to be healed. Here, however, He did not need to touch the leper in order to encourage him to believe; the man was already a believer in an extraordinary sense; at the same time he had learned the lesson of submission and resignation, for instead of clamoring for relief, he simply put his case into the hands of the Great Physician; his prayer was only an implied petition. For the leper's sake the touch may not have been necessary; and yet how much it meant to him! A human hand was laid upon his fevered and corroding flesh, after the lapse of years, and after unspeakable isolation and suffering! In all that time no human being had come into contact with him; no little child had ventured to caress him; no wife or sister or mother had dressed his ulcerous flesh; no man had laid a finger in greeting or kindness upon him since that awful day, years ago, when the priest after examination

had pronounced him a leper, and had spoken his sentence: "Thou shalt dwell alone; thou art accursed; thou art to all thy fellows and in the sight of God unclean; go forth from the dwellings of men and bear thy burden and thy carcass out of their sight!" Alone he had gone forth to wrestle with his anguish of mind and body; alone he had borne his load of pain and solitude,—and now to feel the soothing, gentle hand of Jesus touch him; it was like a breath of heaven to one who had been living in hell. The healing touch was an extraordinary token of the sympathy of Christ, an overplus from the boundless stores of His compassion!

It was, furthermore, the beginning of the breakdown of heartless ritualistic ceremonialism, the inauguration of the task of smiting to the earth the barriers which caste, legal enactment, superstition, and prejudice had built up about the leper and such as he,—a rebuke needed in every age by those who fail to recognize in the form of the outcast and the lowly signs of kinship and brotherhood. In the face of the legal prescriptions in the case; in defiance of the dense and superstitious prejudices of His disciples and of the multitude, notwithstanding ages of custom, harder than adamant, the Master touched the leper, and thus assured him of his royal lineage and relationship. Blessed spectacle! and as full of

meaning for our own time and generation as for the times of our Lord!

By that single touch the Master said to the wondering and listening centuries: "Behold Me, the Lord and Giver of life, the Prince of glory, the Son of God, touch this man in token of recognition, fellowship, compassion, brotherhood! Rags, filth, festering flesh, physical blight, poverty, the color-line, caste distinctions,—these are no signs of separation from Me, no bars against admission into My kingdom. Down through all disguises and disfigurements I look, and find underneath them all a human soul, which I waken into new hope and health and life by My healing touch. I have come to seek and to save that which was lost. This leper is an own brother to the King. I put My hands upon him in token of our common relationship."

O what a rebuke was by this act for all time administered to supercilious pride, to cruel caste, to human prejudice and hate, and to all methods of long-range philanthropy!

And then consider for a moment what a fruitful touch that was. Out of it have come the healing and recuperative ministries of modern medicine, the work of the nurse, the physician, the hospital, and the asylum, and all the myriad philanthropies which make our age a marvel among the centuries. And

to-day there can be found no disease too dreadful, no patient too squalid or loathsome or deformed, no wounds too ghastly, to be helped and served by the surgeon, the physician, and the nurse. Healing hands, soothing touches, gentle and considerate ministrations for the lowest and the vilest—all because one day in the long ago Jesus of Nazareth touched a perishing leper and healed him!

"Thine arm, O Lord, in days of old
Was strong to heal and save;
It triumphed o'er disease and death,
O'er darkness and the grave;
To Thee they went, the blind, the dumb,
The palsied and the lame;
The leper with his tainted life,
The sick with fevered frame.

And lo! Thy touch brought life and health,
Gave speech and strength and sight;
And youth renewed and frenzy calmed
Owned Thee, the Lord of light!
And now, O Lord, be near to bless,
Almighty as of yore,
In crowded street, by restless couch,
As by Genesareth's shore.

Be Thou our great Deliverer still,
Thou Lord of life and death;
Restore and quicken, soothe and bless
With Thine almighty breath.
To hands that work and eyes that see
Give wisdom's heavenly lore;
That whole and sick, and weak and strong,
May praise Thee evermore."

IX.

A MAN AS AN HIDING PLACE.

"And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."—Isa. xxxii, 2.

1. *There is only one Man in the whole human race of whom all these things could be said,—and that is the Man Christ Jesus.* Among all who have ever lived on the globe, teachers, sages, rulers, reformers, legislators, helpers of every grade, only one can be indicated of whom it can be said that he is a covert from the wind, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,—and that is the Man whose birth at Bethlehem cut the ages in two, divided human history in twain, marked the epoch from which in all after time the nations should reckon their dates, introduced the elements of philanthropy into the world, planted a new hope in the weary heart of our race, put a new song upon human lips, and established the

kingdom of heaven among men. The fact of His birth, now before us in the Christmas season once more, suggests His humanity as an edifying theme of meditation; He was a *man,* born of a woman, made under the law, subject to temptation and toil, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and by virtue of His human experiences, having become one of us, and yet being divine in His lineage and spirit and authority and power, He has become the only refuge and covert to which we may fly in danger and need. His humanity, real, tender, full of sympathy, and yet full of power, makes Him as an hiding place from the wind, makes His ministry like that of rivers of water in a dry place, bringing refreshment and fertility and beauty in its wake, and renders Him in His relations to the grief-stricken, the oppressed, and the heavy-laden like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Under these Oriental figures of speech let us find the blessings which they symbolize, the treasures of safety, comfort, rest, shelter, and refreshment which are lodged for the human race in His divine humanity.

2. *The Oriental metaphors found in the text* are not easily apprehended at their full value except by those who have traveled in the tropical deserts of the Old World, or who have crossed the dusty plains of the New, the vast and dreary and yet wonderfully

impressive prairies of our own continent. The imagery of the text is not peculiar to Isaiah, but is found in some of its expressions and aspects in other writers of the Old Testament. They lived in lands which languished under the equatorial sun; they were familiar with drought, and dust, and dreadful heat. They had all passed through seasons when there was no rain, when the heavens were brass, and the earth was parched and sere and barren;—they knew what it was to travel over vast tracts of sand, where every breath of air was like a hot blast from an oven. And they knew also what it was to have this long, dreadful spell of heat to be suddenly broken up by tempestuous storms which swept the surface of the earth with a besom of destruction. Under these circumstances their symbols as found in the text, and elsewhere, became charged with a significance and vividness and force which are extraordinary. Men with a poetical temperament and a prophetic spirit, and endowed with the rich, fertile, and glowing imagination of the Orient, understood by the very stress of their circumstances, by their own oft-repeated experience, what these symbols meant,—"a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, rivers of water in a dry place, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And when they described One Man by these metaphors and

similes, when they symbolized His ministry of grace and renewal and rescue and invigoration by this imagery, they were attributing to Him the possession of the best qualities, the highest and noblest functions, that they were acquainted with. A Man who should be all of this to other men,—it must be clear that He must transcend His fellows.

3. *This conclusion is made evident from the fact that the psalmists and the prophets use these same terms to describe the Divine Being.* David says, The Lord is my refuge and my fortress and my high tower. Isaiah (xxv, 4) says: O Lord God, Thou hast been a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat. Moses said to Israel (Deut. xxxiii, 27): The eternal God is thy refuge. Martin Luther, you may recall, built upon the forty-sixth psalm one of his great hymns, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,* one of the translations of which begins:

> "A fortress firm and steadfast rock
> Is God in time of danger;
> A shield and sword in every shock,
> From foe well known, or stranger."

That psalm begins with the utterance, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. When Luther was perplexed and driven, when his foes threatened him and his perils multiplied, he was

accustomed to call his friends together and say, "Let us turn to our stronghold: Sing the forty-sixth Psalm." So in the forty-eighth Psalm we read that God hath made Himself known in the palaces of Judah as a refuge. And in another place we read that God's children shall have a place of refuge. And still again in the farewell address of the Lawgiver of Israel we are told, In the Lord Jehovah there is an everlasting refuge, or, as the margin renders it, the Rock of Ages. (Deut. xxxii, 4.)

These are a few passages out of scores that might be cited showing that the same metaphors which are used in the text as descriptive of the Man referred to, are applied in other places to the Supreme God. It must therefore be a supreme, unique, exceptional, and transcendent sort of man who is had in view by the prophet in the words of the text. No mere man, however extraordinary his gifts and abilities, can come completely under the description of the passage so as to fill out its meaning perfectly. The symbolism fits only one Man, that One whose divine humanity is the new type and model for all men, whose compassions and philanthropies and graces have been the renewing force of all our civilization, and whose invitations of mercy, provisions for human need, comforting words, and guiding hand con-

stitute Him indeed the Shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land for all our race. His grace and mercy and power more than justify the words of the poet:

"The Shadow of the Rock!
Abide! Abide!
This Rock moves ever at thy side,
Pausing to welcome thee at eventide.
Ages are laid
Beneath its shade—
Rest in the Shadow of the Rock!

The Shadow of the Rock!
Always at hand,
Unseen it cools the noontide land,
And quells the fire that flickers in the sand.
It comes in sight
Only at night—
Rest in the Shadow of the Rock!"

4. It may help us to apprehend the truth found in the text if we recall a principle which is susceptible of very wide illustration; namely, *that in every crisis in human affairs the hearts of a community, a State, or a nation turn toward some man of the hour, whose resources of leadership, helpfulness, wisdom, insight, or compassion qualify him for the exigent task to be accomplished.*

In 1889, for instance, the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was devastated by the breaking of a dam, and a destructive flood, which destroyed over two thousand lives, made the center of the beautiful city a waste of sand and gravel, undermined and car-

ried away stores, houses, churches, railroad trains, bridges, in all the worst calamity of the sort ever known in the land. At first confusion, horror, chaos, and panic ruled in the whole community. Then a man came to the front,—General Daniel H. Hastings, adjutant-general of the State of Pennsylvania, who was sent by Governor Beaver to take command. The militia were in his charge; the supplies which began to pour in by the hundreds of thousands of dollars were distributed by him; the work of cleaning up the *débris,* of burying the dead, of identifying the victims, of answering inquiries from all parts of the world concerning the missing,—all the task of bringing order out of chaos fell on him,—a work that taxed his wisdom, his sympathies, his executive talents, his patience, his physical strength, his varied abilities, to the utmost. But he proved to be the man for the crisis; not soon will Pennsylvania forget his toil, and now that he is dead that great State, having since then honored him as governor, will continue to recall and commemorate him not only because he was a valiant soldier in the Civil War, and a lawyer of conspicuous rank, and a Chief Executive of noble gifts, but because when a crisis came he was the man for the hour. In a terrible emergency he was to that great Commonwealth as a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest.

A scene of like import and similar suggestiveness was transacted in the town of Butler, Pennsylvania, where typhoid fever was recently epidemic. A man came to the front,—a wise, skilled, and expert physician, a specialist in dealing with this disease. Citizens, nurses, local medical men, ministers, philanthropists, all yielded to him, and acknowledged his authority and leadership. When, in answer to a telegram telling of the ravages of the disease, the number of the dead, the hundreds that were sick, the spread of the epidemic, and the panic that had seized everybody,—he came from an Eastern city, and said, inside of an hour, "We need a hundred thousand dollars at once; give me that best residence in town and that factory, and that office building as hospitals; we must have a hundred more nurses to-day," his word became law, and he became as a refuge and hiding place for that community and for the region threatened by the fever.

Or, taking a larger field for our scope of observation, let us glance at the world of finance for an illustration. Some time ago there was a panic in Wall Street; the industrial stocks, overcapitalized, took a sudden and alarming shoot downwards; railroad securities, as good as gold in their intrinsic values, sympathized with the decline and drooped in

their market ratings until they almost broke the record. No one knew what the outcome might be. A run on the banks, reckless destructions of all valuations in the market, a panic everywhere prevalent,—this seemed to be the prospect. Then it was that a man came to be the hiding place and refuge of the financial realm. Then it was that a master of the situation appeared on the stage. He came to the defense of the industrial and railroad stocks, bought heavily right and left, let it be known that he believed the interests of investors were not in immediate danger, and thus saved the day. In a similar sense General Grant and Grover Cleveland, in critical hours of panic and financial uncertainty, stood like walls of granite against the tides of panic, disaster, fiat currency, free silver, and financial recklessness which swept through the country. They showed by their courage, their insight, their adherence to their convictions, that they appreciated and commanded the situation, and the heart of the Nation turned toward them in confidence and hope. They were as a refuge and hiding place in that critical hour for the world of investors and financiers through all the land.

So there have been other times when a man, by means of his judicial poise, his absolute devotion to

the interests of the people, his discernment of the meaning of the questions which needed to be decided, became a hiding place for the whole Nation. Thus it was with Washington in the Revolution. But for his steadiness of judgment, his freedom from personal ambition, his unselfish service, his fortitude and bravery, his staying qualities, the Colonies would have given up the struggle long before the end came. He was literally the hiding place of the United Colonies for seven long years of war and waiting. And in other crises Andrew Jackson and William McKinley were men toward whom the hearts of the people turned in anxiety and uncertainty, willing to wait, and anxious to trust, and ready to co-operate and more than anxious to save the Union. And then what an illustration we have in the case of that man who stood in the breach in the most dreadful hour of danger which the Union has known! The people and the army in the perilous days of '61 believed in the flag, in the Constitution, in the perpetuity of the national unity, and in the righteousness of their cause, but they believed also above all things in the manhood of the leader who stood at the front, who bore their burdens and endured their sorrows, and strove to comfort them in their need. And when

he looked here and there for a leader for his armies, what a voice was that which aroused and strengthened him when Edmund Clarence Stedman wrote his poem, "Wanted—A Man!" Hear one of his stanzas:

"Is there never one in all the land
One on whose might the Cause might lean;
Are all the common ones so grand,
And all the titled ones so mean?
What if your failure may have been
In trying to make good bread from bran?
From worthless metal a weapon keen?—
Abraham Lincoln, give us a Man!"

These historic illustrations may suffice to suggest the elemental truth that in critical times of trial and peril the heart of the Nation turns to a man for refuge, and finds in his wisdom, his courage, his nobility and leadership a sure foundation for its confidence and hope. And if in the not distant future the United States shall face another crisis, if difficult questions are to be settled and hard problems are to be solved; if the national credit is to be sustained, and the Government's courage is to be justified,—we need not fear with such a man as Theodore Roosevelt at the helm. Once more in time of exigent trial and turbulent agitation and tumultuous uncertainty the heart of the people would lean on a man, and find him equal to the arduous tests of the hour.

Once again it would be true that a man would prove as a hiding place and a covert from the tempest!

4. But perhaps I have tarried too long with these types and illustrations of the truth set forth in the text,—*the truth that for the human race in its toils and temptations, its griefs and pains, its perplexities and burdens, a Man has been found who is to be for a hiding place and a covert from storm and tempest.* The strongest and the best need to find support and stay and guidance and shelter in sources of superhuman strength and help. Self-reliance is an element of vital importance in every great character, but that element alone in urgent and extreme times of trial does not suffice. A life that is of first grade value needs to be anchored and stayed to something above and beyond itself. There are hours when its own strength is insufficient, its own resources are of no avail; it must find help outside of itself or it can not live. In such times of critical danger and need it turns to the stronghold, to the refuge provided in the Gospel, to the Man who has been set forth as a hiding place, and is safe.

Along the Union line of battle, where troops were held in reserve, on the third day at Gettysburg, when the Confederates opened upon the Army of the Potomac their final cannonade, the most dreadful

storm of shot and shell that up to that hour had ever been known on the continent, it seemed for a few moments as if nothing could stand before the fiery tempest. The worst havoc threatened those who were just over the hill, the missiles by the hundred falling and exploding in the midst of them; even the staff officers of the general commanding the army were driven in panic from their headquarters. At one point in the line was a barricade of granite rocks, many rods in extent. A regimental commander, seeing that nothing was gained by exposure to such a tempest of iron hail, quickly commanded his men to shelter themselves behind the rocks. How grateful was that refuge! How safe were those who, hiding there, saw the missiles of death fly past them, or harmlessly strike against the rocky wall which afforded them security till the hour came when they were needed on the front line to beat back the charging columns of Pickett. When a man has gone through an experience like that he realizes what the shadow of a great rock means to one in deadly peril. And looking away from the great struggle at Gettysburg to the daily conflicts and struggles which beset his own life, he may the better understand what the Psalmist had in mind when he exclaimed: "From the ends of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my

heart is overwhelmed, Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!"

Blessed truth, the Man Christ Jesus is our never-failing refuge! Are you perplexed with intellectual difficulties, burdened with doubts, tormented with the doctrinal contentions and uncertainties of the hour? Are you weary and careworn, heartbroken with loss, disaster, or bereavement? Have you been driven with the storms of life until you seem to be in a dreary desert, a land of drought and barrenness and devastation? Are you smitten with a sense of your sinfulness, your weakness, your need of pardon and renewal? I bring to you good tidings of a refuge which is available for you. Turning to the Man who ages ago was set forth in the prophet's picturesque vision as a hiding place, you may find in Him,—in His human sympathies, His tender compassion, His considerate gentleness, His infinite mercy,—a covert from the tempest. He will be to you in the hour of need and trial as rivers of water in a dry place, as the Shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land!

And if you have gone thus far through life without striving to find a place of safety, I beseech you to think on your needs, your dangers, your sins, and turn to the stronghold, to the refuge set before you in the Gospel.

"Haste, traveler, haste! the night comes on,
And many a shining hour is gone;
The storm is gathering in the west,
And thou art far from home and rest.
Haste, traveler, haste!

O, far from home thy footsteps stray;
Christ is the Life and Christ the Way,
And Christ the Light; thy setting sun
Sinks ere thy morning is begun;—
Haste, traveler, haste!

Awake, awake! pursue thy way
With steady course, while yet 't is day;
While thou art sleeping on the ground,
Danger and darkness gather round,—
Haste, traveler, haste!

The rising tempest sweeps the sky;
The rains descend, the winds are high;
The waters swell, and death and fear
Beset thy path, nor refuge near,—
Haste, traveler, haste!

O yes, a refuge you may gain,
A covert from the wind and rain,
A hiding place, a rest, a home,
A refuge from the wrath to come,—
Haste, traveler, haste!

Then linger not in all the plain,
Flee for thy life, the mountain gain;
Look not behind, make no delay,
O speed thee, speed thee on thy way,—
Haste, traveler, haste!

Poor, lost, benighted soul! art thou
Willing to find salvation now?
There yet is hope; hear mercy's call:
Truth, Life, Light, Way! in Christ is all!
Haste to Him, haste!"

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